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or
THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

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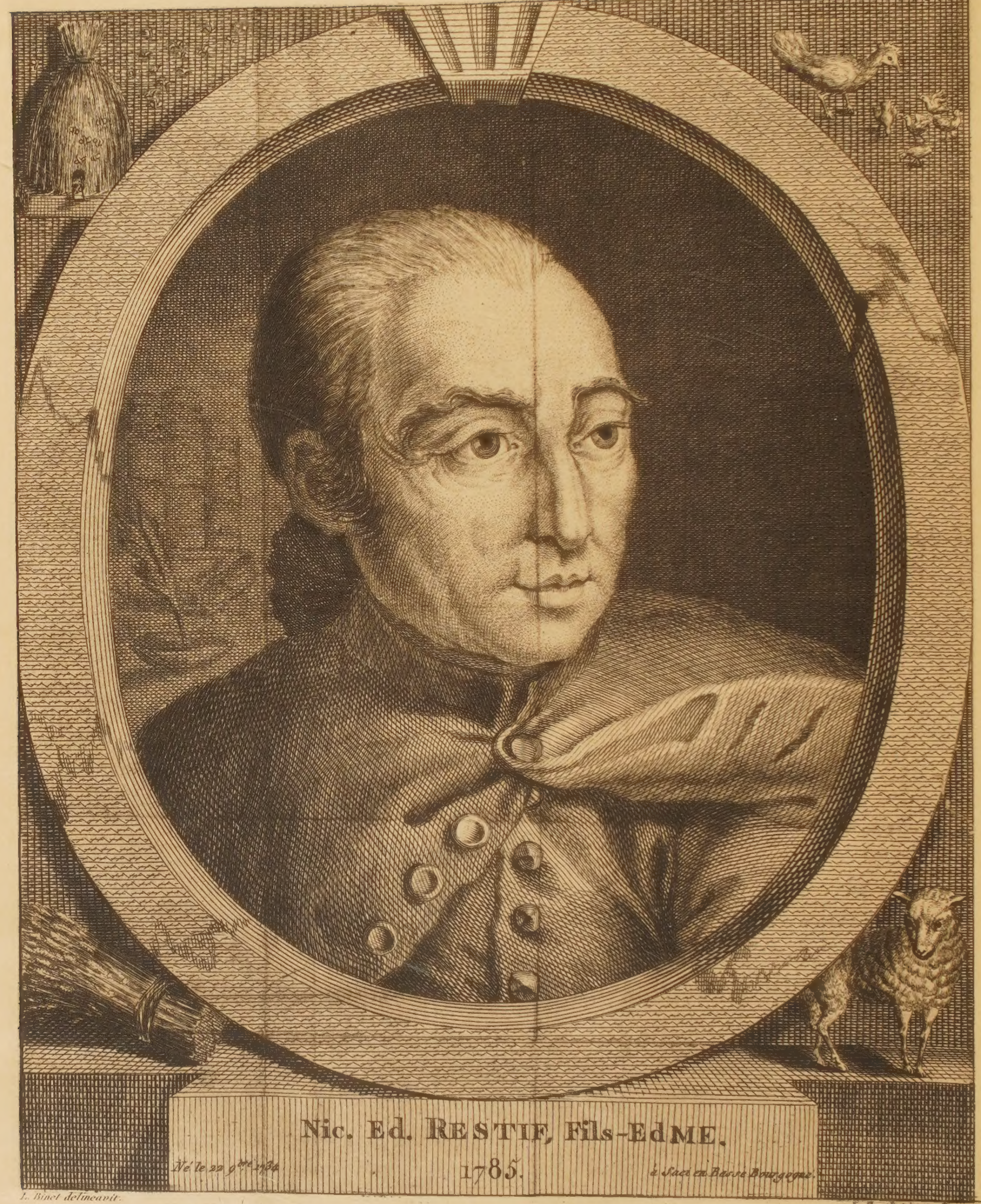

Nic. Ed. RESTIF, Fils-EdME.

Né le 22 9^{bre} 1734 1785. à Saci en Basse Bourgogne.

L. Binet delineavit. L. Berthet incis dicavit

Son esprit libre et fier, sans guide, sans modele,
Même alors qu'il s'égare étonne ses rivaux;
Amant de la nature, il lui dut ses pinceaux
Et fut simple, inégal et sublime comme elle.

MONSIEUR NICOLAS

or

THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

The Intimate Memoirs of

RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE

Translated
into
English
by

R. CROWDY MATHERS

Edited with an Introduction by

HAVELOCK ELLIS

*

VOLUME I

*

for subscribers only

JOHN RODKER · LONDON · MCMXXX

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS TO VOLUME I

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[Taken from *Drame de la Vie*]

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INTRODUCTION

TO

MONSIEUR NICOLAS

by

HAVELOCK ELLIS

I

A GUTTER ROUSSEAU—*LE Rousseau du ruisseau* — is the description commonly applied to Restif de la Bretonne. There is enough truth in that pun, however inadequate, to make it a fair starting point for the discussion of a remarkable figure in a remarkable epoch which he most vividly illustrated. Restif always lived in contact with the pavement; he was plebeian in spirit as well as in life, and it was, indeed, because he was so close in feeling to the streets, as he was earlier to the countryside, that he was able to produce pictures of everyday life in town and country such as we seek in vain among more distinguished writers of his time. Rousseau, on the other hand, — springing from craftsmen of old citizen stock, — was in spirit, however he sometimes fell short, of more aristocratic temper, and rose by long efforts of strenuous aspiration, which we may follow step by step, to heights beyond even the discernment of Restif. Yet there were not lacking links of fraternity, and Restif shared with his greater contemporary not only some personal weaknesses and an excessive sensibility but a generous humanitarian ardour, though, for all his innate plebeianism, we can scarcely say he had any saner a vision of what society can yield than came to the man of soaring genius. Rousseau (who was yet a moralist in spite of himself) once declared: "I am an observer, not a moralist; I am the botanist who describes the plant, not the physician who prescribes its uses." Restif similarly, but in his more arrogant way, said of *Monsieur Nicolas:* "I here present a book of natural history which places me above Buffon." He was an ostentatious and effusive moralist, but it is in description, in the vivid presentation of reality, that he was admirable and even a pioneer. A large sphere of activity is indeed possible to the "Rousseau of the Gutter," especially when he happens to be an artist. Restif made the utmost of his possibilities good and bad; he drained his cup of life unscrupulously and indiscriminately, to the last dregs.

From an early period there were those who put forward other claims for Restif de la Bretonne. His fellow countrymen found for him names like the "Voltaire of Chambermaids," the "Rousseau of the Market," the "Teniers of Fiction," and *Monsieur Nicolas* was called the *"Liaisons Dangereuses* of the lower classes." Some of his books were widely popular in his time, especially among the middle-class people with whom he was so closely in touch, though they no doubt fell into the hands of all sorts of people; they were to be found (to Michelet's surprise) in the private library of Marie Antoinette, and (to Saint-Beuve's surprise) were admired by Mlle de Lespinasse. Even outside France, in Germany, before the eighteenth century was out, Restif was taken seriously. So fine and learned a critical intelligence as Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote to Goethe from Paris in 1799 that *Monsieur Nicolas* is the truest and most living book there is (though he had no means of judging its truth), adding that he who had not read it will never understand the French character. A year earlier Schiller had called Goethe's attention to this book as of "incalculable value," and spoken with critical discernment of its real qualities; he justly dwelt on the vivacity of the narrative, the multiplicity of the figures, especially of women, and the vivid presentation of the life and customs of a certain section of the contemporary French population; he put it in the same class as Cellini's autobiography. Wieland and Tieck and Lavater regarded Restif de la Bretonne as a phenomenon of the first importance. I do not find that he aroused much interest in England, where attention was concentrated on the greater figure of Rousseau, and the forty-two editions of his *Paysan Perverti* which the credulous Restif believed to have been issued in London were sheer imagination. In 1790, *Pictures of Life,* translated from one of his less important books, was published in London in two volumes, without Restif's name, but I have not been able to find that any other of his books appeared in English until the present edition of *Monsieur Nicolas.* In France itself Restif's popularity evaporated under the stress of the new movements initiated by the Revolution, even before his death, in 1806, which indeed attracted a moment's attention to him again, and even a moment's respect, followed by immediate oblivion.

During the whole of the first half of the nineteenth century the name and works of the "ignoble" Restif, as Sainte-Beuve called him, were treated with indifference or with contempt in France. "His books are nearly all forgotten to-day," a French writer said in 1828. The eighteenth century was in the shade, except in so far as it had been the prelude to the Great Revolution or to the grandiose movement of Romanticism. The only people interested in Restif were third-class writers who found him a rich mine to steal from, and it was to their interest to say as little as possible about him.

At the end of the first half of the nineteenth century a more just conception of the previous century began to be formed, and Restif was one of the first to profit by it. At almost the same moment two distinguished but very unlike people, the refined critic Charles Monselet and the delicate poet Gérard de Nerval, each independently, became interested in Restif and wrote of him prominently with enthusiastic appreciation. Monselet in 1854, in what may be considered, though slight and superficial, the first modern book on Restif, described him as "the strangest figure that ever appeared on the threshold of literature." A little earlier Gérard de Nerval, himself a strange and fascinating figure, wrote a romancing biography of Restif which he included in *Les Illuminés.* There was indeed an extraordinary affinity between these two eccentric spirits who were yet so unlike, and Gérard de Nerval's biographer, Aristide Marie, can write that "it is impossible to exaggerate the degree to which Restif's autobiographical novels modelled the soul and influenced the life of Gérard de Nerval." It is no mean testimony in favour of the earthly-minded Restif that he should have been so cherished by that delicate and ethereal spirit, who even seems to have derived from Restif his doctrine of "erotic predestination" and the "transfusion of souls," the doctrine according to which the same soul may be loved through different bodies.

In 1883 appeared the excellent reprint of *Monsieur Nicolas* by Liseux. The neglected volumes of Restif's early editions with their charming illustrations soon fetched high prices; reprints of fragments of his work appeared; and a period began of what Octave Uzanne called Restifomania. Paul Lacroix in 1875 had thought it worth while to publish a bibliography and iconography of Restif. It was not, however, till after 1889, when Binet first formulated the conception of erotic fetichism, that Restif became, not only an object of scholarly investigation but also of fierce controversy. In various medical publications he was brought forward as a typical example of the sexual perversity of shoe-fetichism. Champions of Restif, thereupon, arose to defend him from this imputation and to assert his normality. Grand-Carteret, who had brought out an abridged edition of *Monsieur Nicolas*, protested indignantly on behalf of this "great and calumniated Nicolas-Edme Restif," and declared: "If Restif was a fetichist the whole eighteenth century was fetichist with him." Even from the medical side, Dr. Louis Barras in 1913 put forth a lengthy monograph, not very scientific in tone, entitled: *Le Fétichisme: Restif de la Bretonne fut-il Fétichiste?* in which he likewise argued that Restif's fetichism was "the fetichism of everybody."

We owe the longest and most substantial study of Restif to the late Dr. Iwan Bloch who in 1906, under the pseudonym of "Eugen Dühren," published in Berlin his *Rétif de la Bretonne: Der Mensch, der Schriftsteller, der Reformator,* and followed it up with a smaller volume of bibliography. Bloch was admirably equipped for this task, not only by his receptive Jewish enthusiasm but by his scientific training, his Germanic thoroughness, and his specialised knowledge in the field of sex literature where Restif is so often to be found. He has no hesitation about describing his hero as a shoe-fetichist, even of the most typical kind, but he is equally sure that this is but one of Restif's many aspects and, taken altogether, he places him confidently on a high pedestal. "In Rétif de la Bretonne," he asserts, "the spirit of the French people, in a certain sense, has been vividly embodied." Nor is Bloch by any means alone in this judgment of Restif's place in the world, and one of his latest champions has even termed him "the greatest writer of the eighteenth century." Finally, in 1928, this champion, M. Funck-Brentano, in his *Retif de la Bretonne* (published under the editorial care of M. Emile Magne), has produced a scholarly biography of Restif based on a fresh examination of the sources, and testifying to the serious place which Restif now takes in French literature.

Restif himself would certainly have accepted the highest estimates of that place. He never hesitated to put forth large claims for himself, and to put them forth with emphasis. The unhappiness of his later years was heightened by the failure of his world to take him at his own valuation. It is certain that no man was ever more present in his work than Restif was in the copious writings he was constantly pouring out. Alike in the books put forth as truth, which were in part fiction, and in the books put forth as fiction, which were in part truth, Restif himself was always there: now he exaggerates; again he conceals; he disguises himself in embroidered garments; he is always there. But he is there in such a copious and manifold and elusive way that we need to examine his manifestations with critical care in order to define the essential Restif.

II

Nicolas-Anne Edme Retif was born at Sacy, a village near Auxerre in Burgundy, on the 23rd of October, 1734, and baptized the same day, which seems to indicate that his life was despaired of. Retif was his correct family name, not Restif or even Rétif. He himself, however, adopted the form Restif, which he had found in an old history of Auxerre, and he added "de la Bretonne" from the name of a farm-house at Sacy into which the family moved when he was a child of eight. This farm-house still belongs to descendants of the family and in the chief room now hangs a portrait of its most famous member.

Although he sometimes liked to dwell on his peasant origin, Restif's home was not that of peasants in the humble sense. At that period the condition of the peasantry had sunk very low, to an unheard of degree of misery, the contemporary Marquis d'Argenson states. The peasants were haggard figures in rags, and their mud hovels, Arthur Young tells, would in England only be considered fit for pig-sties. Restif's father was a well-to-do farmer and vineyard cultivator, living in a community which enjoyed many privileges and considerable self-government; he had once been a clerk in Paris; he was only a peasant in the sense that he himself worked on the land with his family and his thirteen men-servants and maid-servants. Joseph Delteil, the distinguished writer of to-day, is similarly, like Restif's father, a "vigneron" and proud of the fact. His position corresponded to that of the yeoman in England at the same date. In addition to labour on the land he exercised the functions of village notary and justice of the peace. No doubt he was a man of admirable character, and his literary son often celebrated his virtues, notably in *La Vie de mon Père,* a romancing and sentimentalised version of his father's life and a charming though highly idealised picture of rural conditions, which has seemed to some to be Restif's masterpiece. He married twice, having seven children by each marriage. The first wife we may fairly regard as a peasant woman. Not so the second, Barbe Ferlet, of whom Nicolas was the eldest child. Although young she had already been a widow, and belonged to a Burgundian family which was well connected, while she had herself, Restif states, once been in the service of the Princesse d'Auvergne in Paris. That may be an important detail. It would explain how it was that her eldest boy was not brought up in rough and rustic ways; we may understand his frequent emphasis on personal cleanliness, hardly characteristic of ordinary life in his time and land, his prescription of three baths a week, and his remark in describing the type of the "untidy wife" in *Les Parisiennes,* when he was himself approaching old age; "the unfortunate thing is that the exterior is always the symbol of the interior; the woman who is untidy, disorderly, and dirty has the same defects in her soul." There may have spoken the son of the Princess's lady's maid, though it is to be feared that Restif kept these fine sentiments as a prescription for women; he himself, we are told, paid in later life no attention to the cares of the toilet, and constantly wore the same old clothes with but little trace of linen beneath. But as a boy he seems to have been brought up in such fine-gentlemanly ways that the other village boys nick-named him "Monsieur Nicolas" and so furnished the title for his most memorable work. There was more about Barbe Ferlet, however, than the mere refinements of training in an aristocratic house. We may perhaps find in her a chief element of her most notable child's heredity. We search his character in vain for much indication of his father's solid virtues, though the elder Restif's father is displayed as a harsh, morbid, and dissolute character, which may well have had its significance in the heredity. But we may easily find much of the mischievous and petulant vivacity attributed to his mother, though that characteristic hardly appears in the account he wrote of her in the form of a story, "La Femme de Laboureur," in *Les Contemporaines,* where she is represented as embodying Restif's own ideal of the perfect wife: "She regarded her husband as her Head, her Guide, her Master, and her Father; she was far from that dangerous and criminal system of equality which can only be put forth by libertines in towns." Bibi, as she was familiarly named, had evidently to undergo a severe discipline such as her son never felt called upon to submit to.

Monsieur Nicolas' morbid nervous sensibility, whether it was from his mother or his paternal grandfather that he inherited it, appeared at an early age. He was, if we may trust his own account, until small-pox destroyed his good looks a very beautiful child, — with fine eyes, curly hair and a delicate pale complexion, — but subject to night terrors, which were not calmed by putting him to sleep at the foot of his parents' bed. He was attacked by terrifying visions in the dark, and he felt his hair standing on end with fright if he had to go outside the door after nightfall. This nervous over-excitability soon manifested itself in sexual precocity (he claims to have become a father at the age of ten and a half) and was continued throughout life in a constant preoccupation with matters of sex. It was apt to overflow in an attraction to sexual aberrations (nakedly and outrageously illustrated by his *Anti-Justine*), of which the most innocent and the most frequently recurring was shoe-fetichism. The dispute as to the extent to which he became the victim of this aberration is unprofitable. It is evident that, in the adoration of his preferred symbol of womanhood, he went beyond the limits that may fairly be called normal, and that he exhibited the germs, even more than the germs, of a variety of perversions, but it is also clear that he hardly reached that extreme of perversion when the symbol becomes more important than the woman. Here, no doubt, the robust solidity of his paternal heredity came to the support of his nervous temperament. Restif's prolific extravagances were confined within a firm framework which preserved him from destruction; even on the intellectual plane, it is curious to note how his Utopian schemes of social reform were generally fitted into a system of old-fashioned conventional notions, based on the traditions he had inherited, and with a perpetual ostentatious insistence on "virtue" which, in spite of what we know of his life, we need not consider altogether hypocritical, and merely due to awareness of its popularity among the middle-class audience he addressed. Fundamentally Restif always retained the traditional morality. He abandoned the Christian creed but not Christian morals. That inoculation of Jansenist teaching in boyhood of which he speaks with admirable insight in *Monsieur Nicolas* left upon him an ineffaceable mark.

As a small child Monsieur Nicolas was sent to the village school, but he learned little there, though he made acquaintance with the rod, for his precocity was all in sensibility and not in intelligence. His associations with his girl friends, — often such as the moralist must consider extremely unwholesome for a child, — were the chief educative influence at this early period, blended with a growing delight in the lovely natural scenery of his homeland; indeed, Restif has sometimes seemed to suggest to the spectator a Gilles de Rais in Arcadia. He made no progress in study until he was taken in hand by his eldest half-brother, a priest who belonged to the severe Jansenist party in religion. When he was twelve, a venerable member of the Restif family, a sagacious old lawyer, arrived on a visit to Sacy, and after examining young Nicolas at his father's request pronounced against making him a farmer and in favour of giving him a superior education. Therewith the fate of Nicolas was decided. He was taken to Paris and placed at the Bicêtre Asylum, where was then a choir school, with the organisation of a religious confraternity of Jansenist character, in which another of his half-brothers, Abbé Thomas, had just been appointed to a post. So Monsieur Nicolas became, with a name borrowed from a famous Father of the Church whom the Jansenists regarded as their special patron, "Brother Augustine," and himself for a brief period a devout Jansenist.

In 1747, however, when Nicolas was fourteen years old, the Jansenists fell out of favour in the State, the Bicêtre seminary was put into other hands, and Nicolas was taken for the completion of his education to the parsonage of Courgis, a village near Auxerre, where his eldest brother, Abbé Nicolas-Edme, had become the village priest and was now joined by Abbé Thomas. The small parsonage, close to the church and the cemetery, still stands exactly as in Monsieur Nicolas' time, sheltered by a great and venerable elm said to have been planted in the days of Henry IV. It was in the church at Courgis that, on Easter Sunday, 1748, young Nicolas first saw Jeannette Rousseau, the local notary's daughter, a girl ten years older than himself, and the vision produced so powerful an impression on the boy's exalted sensibility that he ever afterwards considered that on that day he had met his fate. Jeannette Rousseau was his Laura, his Yvonne de Galais, though

Restif's earthly and facile temperament easily found "accommodations" for his ideal in an endless stream of women who embodied one or other of her perfections. Jeannette was the source of Restif's famous metaphysical doctrine of fidelity, by love for the same soul in a succession of different bodies. The vision of the original ideal remained, and when forty years later Restif learnt that Jeannette Rousseau at the age of sixty-four was still unmarried he even for a moment schemed to make her his wife. This series of events, however, is described in detail in *Monsieur Nicolas,* with much reticence and much exaggeration, no doubt many added embroideries, which the critical reader may discern, for, as his latest and most competent biographer, M. Funck-Brentano, remarks, "we must accept with reserve the narrative of Monsieur Nicolas' love scenes in his autobiography."

In 1751 Nicolas was taken to Auxerre and apprenticed to the local printer, Fournier, whose wife, under the name of "Madame Parangon," played an important part in Restif's life. Fournier (though not to be confused with the more eminent Parisian printer of that name) was a printer of some distinction, enjoying special privileges, and his house and printing establishment were situated close to the famous Tour de l'Horloge in the centre of that charming and interesting old Burgundian town on the broad and peaceful Yonne. Auxerre has scarcely yet learned to be proud of its association with Restif de la Bretonne; one may not easily see or hear his name there, even when one is staying at the old Hôtel de la Fontaine close to his early home, but there is much still to recall him; indeed the house, now a chemist's shop, still remains, little changed from Restif's time. "How pretty the girls are at

Auxerre!" suddenly exclaimed young Nicolas as he gazed out of the window on to the street, and I confess that I have found myself independently making the same remark more than one hundred and seventy years later, though with none of the results that followed in the case of that impressionable boy.

Restif was now seventeen, of middle height, not specially good looking, but with large dark eyes, long brown curly hair, thick eyebrows, and red lips; he could be ardent and vivacious in speech but he was generally silent, very wild and shy, hating society and easily blushing when addressed, "the modest girl" one of his cousins called him. In spite of his extreme sensibility, his disorderly imaginations, and his shyness, he was not without physical strength and possessed much agility. We may perhaps accept his own assurance that girls found him attractive. There is no doubt that he found them attractive. In old age he prepared a calendar of the women who had fascinated him, one lady saint for each day of the year, and when every day was filled up there were still many women left out. In portraits that show him in early manhood we see a rather pleasant face with large sensitive eyes; the bird of prey's head which we more commonly associate with him belongs to later life. At the same time Cubières-Palmézeaux, who knew him well in old age, describes him as of average height with large forehead, and large dark eyes revealing "the fire of genius," aquiline nose, black eyebrows descending on the eyelids as years increased and suggesting an eagle or an owl, a hairy chest like a bear, altogether a vigorous, laborious, sober man, skilful and industrious in his work as a printer, notwithstanding his perpetually effervescent emotional temperament and the always recurring thirst for new debauches, combined, in apparent inconsistency, with what seemed fundamental goodness, a moral and physical Hercules, with "the finest head in the world."

It was in Auxerre, whither he had returned from Paris to work again with Fournier, that Monsieur Nicolas found a wife. That was an event which he speedily came to regard as one of the unhappiest in his life, though he put down the unhappiness, not to his own nature and conduct, but to his really admirable wife. She was certainly unsuited for the position she too rashly assumed, though it is difficult to say what woman would have been better suited, unless, indeed, some ignorant peasant, humble and subservient to all her master's extravagant impulses.

Agnès Lebègue was a refined and cultured girl far above the average in ability, brought up in easy circumstances as the daughter of a highly esteemed apothecary at Auxerre who had recently suffered severely from legal proceedings which were entirely to his credit. When she married Nicolas in 1760, Agnès was prepared, and quite able, to be a sympathetic helpmate, alike in domestic and intellectual affairs, as well as to further his prospects in the world. Joubert many years later fell in love with her, and if we are tempted to take too seriously Restif's wild and random abuse of his wife, we may remember the testimony in her favour thus supplied by that shrewd and delicate spirit. Her troubles began from the first; she had to struggle with the domestic disorder in which from poverty and taste Restif habitually lived, and the marriage was scarcely consummated before she discovered that her husband had become the lover of no less than three of her girl friends. Nevertheless she soon became by her energy and ability the chief and often the sole support of the family, in which four children rapidly appeared, while her husband sometimes earned nothing; she taught; she took in boarders; at one time she became a milliner. If under these circumstances it was not long before the young wife began to lose her youth and her illusions — she never lost her charm — Restif, of whose fundamental goodness his friends so often assure us, might have had the grace to recognise that any faults in the marriage relationship could not be entirely hers; he might also have acknowledged the numerous occasions in his troubled life when he fell back on his despised wife for the assistance she never refused. Her chief defect in his eyes was what he calls her *"fureur du bel esprit."* She had literary accomplishment; she was skilful in the epistolary art, and, in accordance with the custom of many superior women of her time, she wrote letters which were privately circulated among friends. Nothing could be more aloof from what Restif regarded as the proper sphere of woman, at all events of woman as wife. Yet he had ample and manifold reasons for gratitude. It may even have been in emulation of his wife that a few years later his own slumbering literary aptitudes were stimulated into activity, and they took on at first the same epistolary form. The virulent abuse which in public and in private he poured upon his wife "unveil the human heart" of Restif more than any of his avowed confessions. The "goodness of heart" which impressed his friends was largely that slipshod emotional generosity which always impresses superficial observers. We may accept Restif's way of becoming an author, as we may accept (to use Funck-Brentano's comparison) Gauguin's way of becoming a painter by abandoning his wife and family to set out for the Pacific. It may be one of Nature's methods for making an artist, but we are not called on to admire it.

At this point we reach a disputed period in Restif's life. In 1798, in old age, we know that he secured a post in the police department as a censor of private correspondence. We can well believe that he found this duty full of interest. But a modern scholar, Grasilier, in his recent book, *Rétif de la Bretonne Inconnu,* finds reason to believe that, some thirty years earlier, exactly at the period when on becoming an author he threw up work as a printer, Restif entered the service of the secret police. That function would serve to account for his frequent mysterious nocturnal activities, of which *Les Nuits de Paris* was one of the literary by-products. Such duties could hardly have failed to prove congenial to Restif, but Grasilier's arguments have not proved convincing to Funck-Brentano, chiefly on the ground that we can detect no evidence in Restif's writings of the alleged activities. I may remark that I cannot accept this counter-argument as absolutely conclusive. Duties of this kind are necessarily secret, and Restif was quite capable of maintaining secrecy about his own activities when he considered that his interest or his vanity made that desirable. Casanova for many years acted as a political spy, but it is on State archives and not on his confession that we depend for our knowledge of the fact. The point may be left undecided.

It was during his nocturnal rambles that Restif initiated the most curious of his methods of autobiographic record, the "inscriptions" he carved on the stone parapets and walls of the Ile Saint-Louis. These inscriptions were records of important events in his life, which had to be made on the very day or that immediately following, with brief comments in Latin, carved with a key at first, but afterwards with a special tool he had made for the purpose.

The Ile Saint-Louis is a peaceful and delightful spot even to-day, as those of us well know who have ever dwelt in one of its ancient houses with beautifully panelled rooms and silent courtyards. It must have been more charming still in the eighteenth century, and yet more so by contrast with the crowded and filthy Ile de la Cité. But no one ever gained so much joy from the Ile Saint-Louis as Restif. For him it was a sacred spot; his "beloved Island" was a temple for the most fervid manifestations of his ebullient sentimentality. Sometimes in moments of exaltation he even fell on his knees on the pavement. An amazed and alarmed house-porter once approached him in this posture: "What are you doing? This is not a church." Restif solemnly rose and pointed to a bright star: "Do you not see the starry vault of God's great temple, wretched man? Go and guard your gate." This went on for years. It was Restif's special delight to seek out the anniversaries of the events he thus commemorated so that he might double and triplicate the joy of the original moment by reviving its memory. It was inevitable that these nocturnal perambulations should attract the attention of street arabs apparently even more ferocious in those days than they are now, who would lie in wait to play tricks on the strange figure in the long cloak and on his inscriptions, sometimes throwing stones or mud, so that Monsieur Nicolas was put to flight. The persecution of these "little ogres," as he calls them, at last became intolerable. Restif copied his inscriptions and abandoned his cherished island. The manuscript book was eventually discovered and published in 1889 by M. Paul Cottin, as *Mes*

Inscripcions. The inscriptions themselves have now all disappeared through renewal of the stone-work. But Monselet records that in 1847 one still remained on the Quai d'Orléans.

Restif impulsively abandoned printing for writing though for many years after marriage it brought in little or no money, so that he was often dependent on his wife's exertions. Subsequently he sometimes combined the two occupations, composing the book in his head as he composed it in type, just as an author of to-day may with a typewriter. He became at length an easy and prolific writer and left some two hundred volumes behind him, though so far from being a precocious author. He was thirty-three when he published his first novel, *La Famille Vertueuse* (put forward as "letters translated from the English"), which had little success and deserved no more; so also his second novel, *Lucile ou les Progrès de la Vertu,* both these books, it will be observed, revealing Restif's ostentatious love of virtue. The third, *Le Pied de Fanchette,* in which all the incidents depended on the heroine's pretty foot, was less virtuous but rather better. Later followed his best novel, *Le Paysan Perverti,* which was really about himself slightly disguised and converted into the hero of a pathetic drama. Thereafter Restif's profuse literary activities are hard to follow. But there are two features which mark nearly all and constitute the entwined threads on which they are strung: they are nearly always inspired by the "muse" of some woman who at the moment attracted him, and they nearly all contain, with whatever modifications, a foundation of fact in which Restif himself often plays a leading part. That statement itself tells us much about Restif. He could not write romance unless he was supplied with a foundation of fact, and he could not deal with fact without yielding to the temptation to romance. This is what we find whenever we "unveil the human heart" of Monsieur Nicolas.

It is such interwoven threads of fact and romance which characterize *Les Contemporaines* (or "Adventures of the Prettiest Women of the Present Age"), perhaps — with all its lapses into carelessness and banality — the most generally attractive of Restif's works outside *Monsieur Nicolas,* and it has indeed been considered one of the most interesting works in the whole range of French literature. It is certainly one of the most extensive, for it is contained in fully forty-two volumes (not counting some further continuations under other names) and it includes seven hundred and sixteen stories and short stories. They were written between 1782 and 1786 when Restif had attained the maturity of his powers, and certainly present an invaluable picture of middle-class life during the second half of the eighteenth century, covering, indeed, the most varied aspects of that life. Assézat has enumerated two hundred and eighty-two different occupations as exercised by the heroines of these stories, some of them now extinct, and every story probably has some foundation in fact. The stories are of very various quality, some admirable, others sinking to the depth of platitudinous commonplace. This work contains no adventures, Restif tells in the Introduction, save those that the heroine's story naturally gives rise to. In a note, "those persons who have subjects to be treated or who have themselves composed their own story" are invited to write to the author at an address given. Restif claims that he is presenting "events which occur daily in the interior of the home and which by their variety as well as by their singularity will help you to anatomise the human heart." The reader will find here, he says, "neither the terrible gloom of English books, which fatigues even while it attracts, nor the butterfly absurdity of ordinary French pamphlets." In the Preface to the second edition he emphasises the moral lesson of his work. He is, he says, preaching the morality of nature, reason, and good sense; he is "courageously standing up against the most dangerous of abuses, that most likely to destroy morality and public welfare, the insubordination of women"; he prefers "truth to his own interest," in thus "opening the eyes of women to their own real destination." But just as in the episodes of his actual life this moral destination of women is far from clear, so also in his stories it is not too conspicuously displayed. We may take for instance, almost at random, "L'Amazone ou la Fille qui veut faire un Enfant," a story with which, as we find in *Monsieur Nicolas,* Restif was himself mixed up. The Amazon is a girl of good position at Dijon — the well-educated daughter of a rich tradesman — who hated marriage and was not attracted to men, but she had strong maternal instincts and wanted a child. She chose a young gardener of good disposition to be the father, imposing secrecy and sending him out of the country directly after, carrying through the whole affair so skilfully, with so high a hand, that all goes well. Restif leaves his feminine readers to draw what moral they like. But his method of inviting stories from strangers led to troubles he had not foreseen. Unscrupulous correspondents gratified private spite by the stories they sent him, on one occasion at least telling him that he need not change the names as they had already been changed, whereas the real names were given. Endless troubles were thus caused, and the timorous Monsieur Nicolas was sometimes stopped in the street and insulted by persons who were complete strangers to him. The *Contemporaines* proved, however, an enormous popular success. They were something new in literature and exactly suited to the middle-class audience to which they were addressed. Restif's devoted friend and disciple Milran writes from Cherbourg to say that he prefers Restif to Shakespeare: "I don't like that barbarian Shakespeare," he adds, "who has so many admirers. You are far indeed from so uncivilised a genius." Restif cannot resist printing this letter, though he adds in a footnote: "So much the worse for me and my readers. I devour this author and exclaim at every reading 'Blessed be Shakespeare and his translator!'" Restif made very large profits out of *Les Contemporaines.* But he could not help exclaiming: "Oh! how painful it is to make honey when one wishes only to extract it from the flowers of truth!"

Les Contemporaines, the climax of Restif's activities in story-telling, gives indications of his moral and social theories. As time went on he became ever more interested, and ever more extravagant, in moral and cosmogonic speculation. Like many distinguished authors who have not been able to reform themselves, he found consolation in seeking to reform mankind. His interest in social reform and in the construction of ideal communities is indeed shown as early as the latter part of *Le Paysan Perverti.* The idea of a sort of phalanstery, which he sketched out, anticipated some of Fourier's ideas, and it is even possible that Fourier may have been inspired by them. The earliest (it was published in 1769) and best-known of Restif's books entirely devoted to social reform, was *Le Pornographe* discussing the reglementation of prostitution, an institution to which throughout life he attached high value and desired to redeem from the contempt in which it is held. A "pornograph," it must be understood, is for Restif a student of prostitution, and he attributes the origin of his rules for brothels to an Englishman called Lewis Moore. The book is ingeniously thrown into an epistolary form, and the elaborately detailed regulations are set forth as an incidental part of the sentimental love-story told in the correspondence of a young man with the friend of whose sister he is enamoured. The brothel he desired to set up Restif proposed to call a "Parthenion," so as not to wound delicate ears by vulgar words, and he trusted that the inmates would not, like modern prostitutes, be what he called automatised, but retain the fresh sensibility to pleasure which, he believed, prevailed in classic times. Such an institution, he maintained, would be "the masterpiece of human wisdom, an imitation of Divinity." He even persuaded himself that the Emperor Joseph II of Austria had adopted and carried out his idea, and the story was spread about (whether or not by Restif) that the Emperor had created him a Baron and sent him his portrait, the democratic author returning the title deeds, but retaining the portrait. To the end Restif cherished his moral enthusiasm in this cause. His friend Bonneville once reproached him with describing too minutely the pleasures of prostitution. Restif defended himself. "Yes," he said with heat, "I am the friend and protector of these houses treated with such contempt. I would far rather go to see a pretty courtesan than make a baby with the wife of my friend or my neighbour." I do not dispute Restif's honesty, but the method he so highly approved had never saved him from making love copiously in the houses of friends and neighbours, and he seems to have exaggerated the number of babies he thus made.

It was over the sanctity of the home, even more than over that of the brothel, that Restif conceived it his mission to watch. Especially, as we have already seen, he wished to protect the morals of women. "If my opinion carried any weight," he said once, "women would be taught nothing but morality; they would be ignorant of all other sciences." In *Les Parisiennes* he deplored the tendency of the Parisian girls of his time to marry for the sake of liberty, independence, and pleasure. It is a detestable abuse to which he would put an end by legislation, and he proposed to prohibit the public performance of such pernicious plays as Molière's *École des Maris.* Even frivolity, he said, is more compatible with feminine virtue than science, which deprives women of their modesty and their lovableness. But when we know Restif we are not surprised to hear that he had many women of distinguished intelligence among his friends, or that for three years he was anxiously desiring to meet the most eminent intellectual woman of his time, Madame de Staël, and that when at last Mercier took him to see her he returned, his friend Cubières tells us, "overwhelmed by admiration, love, and enthusiasm."

Restif's speculations, however, ranged far beyond the sphere of Parisian morals, and became more wildly extravagant with the course of years. Buffon (or Noffub as he sometimes preferred to anagrammatise the name) had been the master from whom he derived the germs of his earlier philosophical ideas. It is needless to say that he was violently opposed to the Church; he used to say to Cubières: "If I were king I would use my power only to abolish Catholicism." In later life he discovered Cyrano de Bergerac and in that writer's brilliant cosmic expeditions Restif found congenial inspiration for his own adventures in the unknown. He set forth a fantastic theory of evolution; his notions of the eternal recurrence of life are regarded as faintly foreshadowing Nietzsche's; and visions of elaborately Utopian communities were always floating before his eyes. He preceded the astronomers in asserting the movement of the solar system through space; he imagined flying machines heavier than air, and even anticipated their modern military function of dropping bombs, mingling these suggestions with the wildest absurdities and the feeblest puerilities. It is part of the everlasting inconsistency of Restif de la Bretonne that this dreamer, who only felt at home in the realm of fantasy, and was perpetually seeking idealistic embellishments for the world, has yet left to us the most intimate realistic pictures we possess of his actual world. It was in 1783, when he was fifty years of age — though he had vaguely planned it earlier, even before Rousseau's *Confessions* — that Restif began to write *Monsieur Nicolas,* his most memorable picture of the life of his time. But it was not until 1794 that he began the publication, for the most part composing it on his little printing press with his own hand, and he completed it three years later.

The final stage of life he was now entering was scarcely happy for Restif. The eccentricities of his ill-balanced temperament were becoming more pronounced. His estimate of his own genius went on increasing as well as his bitterness with the world that failed to appreciate his greatness. When the Revolution came the accompanying financial crash destroyed the large profits he had made by *Les Contemporaines,* and ill-health increased his misery. It is true that he was little affected by the political changes. He was indeed arrested at the outset, but a young girl living on the Ile Saint-Louis testified in his favour. "He is the poor date-carver, a good man," she said; "I often liked to follow to see what he wrote. It was all quite harmless." So he was released, and not long after he became attached to the secret police department (whether or not he had, as Graselier argues, been working for the police during many years already) with the special duty of dealing with intercepted letters, more especially those in Spanish, in the so-called Cabinet Noir. There were many thousands of letters to read and the work was heavy, but the salary was good and Restif had eight or nine clerks under him. When four years later Fouché, who was now in charge of the police, completely reorganised Restif's department, he was "suppressed." He had for a time been full of hope in the revolutionary movement. He detested the tyranny of a proletariat as even worse than that of a monarch, and believed in thorough communism with the abolition of private property. But his enthusiasm for the establishment of this characteristically incoherent scheme of society subsided with the course of events, and the still feverishly active author contented himself with seeking on every side to gain assistance in producing his endless stream of books.

We obtain an amusing glimpse of Restif in the *Mémoires* of the Comte de Tilly, to whom we also owe the most vivid picture we possess of the author of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses,* for he was an observer of insight, though he showed no insight in guiding his own life, which he finally ended by suicide. "One morning to my great surprise," Tilly writes, "there called to see me Mr Restif de la Bretonne, whom I was not aware that I knew, never having had any relations with him. He reminded me that we had met at the house of the Comtesse de Beauharnais, who maintained what was called improperly 'an intellectual bureau,' with good company made up of men of the world and men of letters of varying merit; I had been there two or three times. The author of the *Paysan Perverti* said he had often heard of me ["le beau Tilly" had the reputation of "un homme à bonnes fortunes"] and he had come to ask me to supply him with some 'erotic anecdotes' of my life, in a word 'some striking adventures' which would occupy an advantageous place in a long work he was meditating, to be written for posterity, and not for his contemporaries, of whom he was 'tired.' One could not but laugh at the object of such a visit; it would have been absurd to be angry; but I assured him that my life had been one of frightful sterility; at the same time, thanking him for his attention, I begged him to realise that I had taste enough to know what a precious occasion it would have been to reach posterity, and hoped to reserve for him in better times anecdotes worthy of his fresh colours and virginal touch. My compliments charmed him; he was himself still more enchanted by his works; he did not hesitate to declare that the *Paysan Perverti* was a book of the first order, which would last as long as the language which he had 'emboldened to speak of everything,' and as long as Nature whom he had 'caught on the run.' He congratulated himself on having been misunderstood by a 'tasteless and petty' generation; the calumnies of journalists and academicians, unable to measure him, were his first title to immortality. I replied to everything: 'Very true.' Then I bowed and he left." Tilly was quite able to tell his own "erotic anecdotes," and has done so in his *Mémoires,* in a way that Restif could hardly have excelled. It may be added that, despite the persiflage, his admiration for Restif's works was genuine; it was Tilly who termed him "the Teniers of fiction," and he claims to have convinced

La Harpe, who cherished a prim academic disapproval of Restif, that "there is much gold in this dunghill."

That was before the Revolution. We have another glimpse of Restif's attitude to the world, this time from the inside, at a later period, in correspondence with a lady at Grenoble in 1797. La Citoyenne Fontaine was a young married woman who, with her husband, was an enthusiastic admirer of Restif's books and writes to tell him so. He replies (giving the address where he lodged with one of his daughters in later years, "Rue de la Bûcherie opposite the Rue des Rats") telling her that all men, except Carnot (who liberally supported him until he fell from power) have deceived him, but that he has not been deceived by all women: "Blessed may they be, these alleviators of my sorrowful existence!" "I have just published my *Life,* in order to live," he remarks, but complains of his inability to manage his own business affairs; "men of letters should not legally reach their majority until the age of one hundred." But he still has twenty-six plans for books, all sketched out, which he is prepared to write when opportunity offers. He incidentally says that he is the only one of his family to spell their name "Restif," the others failing to understand that that is the correct ancient form.

Wearing his large felt hat pressed down over his bushy eyebrows, Restif would return in the evening to the shop over which he lived, draw out a little candle from under his famous long blue cloak fastened at the neck, light it at the flame over the counter, put it in the lantern and mount the stairs, without saluting anyone present and often without even answering the remarks that might be made to him. Morose and taciturn, he seldom cared to enter into conversation unless sometimes when he could be induced to talk about himself; then he could grow eloquent, and Cubières tells of "the old Silenus" once talking for six hours on end about himself in the midst of a group of pretty women who had been careful to ply him with excellent Burgundy and were enchanted by his eloquence. His loud voice, especially in old age, is frequently mentioned. Many observers refer to his old, torn, and stained garments in these later years (he once boasted that he had bought no new clothes for twenty-three years), his neglected, dirty, even repulsive appearance. He had acquired a distaste for society and was suspicious even of his friends. Yet he had friends, who even tried to excuse his conduct towards his wife, though they could not but take her part against him. Even that fact was an added grievance in his eyes against the woman whose tricks, it seemed to him, had perverted the judgment of his friends, and he referred to her as an "old coquette" and a "siren." "Has not your sensibility exaggerated your grievance?" wrote his friend La Reynière, trying to put the point as gently as possible. Another friend, Bonneville (whom, I note, Restif characteristically abuses in writing to Madame Fontaine, as "a rascal called Bonneville who is selling *Monsieur Nicolas* and mocking the old man he cheats"), declared after his death that Restif's *La Femme Infidèle,* which even his latest and most devoted biographer calls "a criminal book," was "an offence that could only have been committed during an attack of delirious frenzy." But such an apology, which is in place when we are in the presence of Rousseau's persecutional delusions, cannot be applied to excuse the atrocious and persistent attacks of Restif on his wife. Ivan Bloch has suggested that in Restif's impulse to set up his wife and others as images of horror we have in another shape a continuation of his childhood's visions of terror in the night; he was throughout life perpetually subject to nervous terrors, as his inscriptions clearly show, and they were specially pronounced when he was agitated about his wife, as in 1784. He was haunted by phantoms which sometimes became as real as life. But that explanation hardly mitigates the offence of Restif's violent and public animosity, stimulated by the tender affection which the distinguished Joubert bestowed on a woman, then nearly twenty years older than himself, whom he sought to console. Joubert and his friend Fontanes, two of the finest characters of that age — though Restif calls them "a disgrace to humanity" — had made the acquaintance of Restif out of admiration for his work and in this way learnt to know his wife. Before long all their sympathy went out to her. Not altogether crushed by the anxiety and wretchedness of her life, unhappy and beautiful, as described by Beaunier (who has fully and fairly dealt with the episode in *La Jeunesse de Joubert*), she was charming with the double seduction of sadness and gaiety. The tender friendship and intellectual companionship of these distinguished men enabled her to regain self-esteem and brought her new life. On Joubert's side it was more than friendship, and it may well be that she responded to his affection. Her husband succeeded in securing some of her letters to Joubert and published them in the novel *La Femme Infidèle,* in which he presented his version of the story, not hesitating, however, to alter them as his suspicion dictated. The episode came to a natural end, but it was the first and last romance in the life of Joubert, who was of frail constitution and lived to old age as an intellectual recluse, to attain a place in the first rank of French *pensée*-writers. We have ample testimony to Madame Restif's grace, nobility and intelligence from unimpeachable witnesses, though we may well believe Monselet when he notes that in a pastel of her he had seen in the possession of her grandson, there was in the beautiful face with its powdered head a touch of severity and haughtiness. It was not a fitting mate for a Monsieur Nicolas. She never replied to the outrageous charges he piled upon her, though retort would have been so easy; in his difficulties she never refused the aid he was always ready to accept; after his death she wrote a letter which is the finest testimony in his favour we possess. Brushing aside "the demon of discord which poisoned the spirit of a man naturally good," she bears witness to his laboriousness, to his works of public utility, and dwells on his generosity of heart and his unfailing charity to anyone who might be in need.

In spite of all, there was evidently something attractive and winning in Monsieur Nicolas, whether it was his child-like and helpless abandonments or the fire of genius in his eyes. Even in old age, even on a single meeting, it was possible to find him fascinating. The best witness to this is a young German woman, Helmina von Chézy, who played a part in the Romantic movement. Her picture of Restif, whom she met in 1802 at the house of the Comtesse de Beauharnais, is evidently romanticised, but it deserves to be quoted: "There was something winning and attractive in his appearance. He was of fairly good height, rather plump, and wore his hair, like Bernardin de St Pierre, in natural curls falling on his neck; his face was oval, the nose soft, the mouth pleasant, the large eyes full of expression, with a bright and loving glance; his gentle voice struck the heart. He was so charming to me, as a man in the decline of manly vigour ought to treat a young girl. I would gladly have seen him often, but the anathema pronounced by the world frightened me away. Oh, the world, how willingly and hastily it condemns!" However morose he grew in disposition, however objectionable in appearance, there were always friends to love and tend him, themselves rather eccentric people sometimes, but not seldom people of refinement and intellect, including women, notably the Comtesse Fanny de Beauharnais (aunt of the Empress Josephine), who was continuously helpful during the last years. Restif had become afflicted in health, with hernia and gastric troubles and the results of many earlier venereal infections. But his two daughters, both charming and intelligent, — especially the younger, Marion, who had been early left a widow, — his son-in-law, and a devoted doctor drew round him to soothe his last discontented days. The Emperor also (who, when consul, had ordered the seizure of *L'Anti-Justine*) was at the end induced to assist the failing Restif. He died at his lodgings, now No. 16 Rue de la Bûcherie (near the Quai Saint-Michel), on the 3rd of February, 1806, in his seventy-second year.

He was buried, not, as he had expressed the wish, beside his father and mother at Sacy, but in the cemetery of Saint-Catherine, now Montparnasse. Eighteen hundred persons, including some of distinction, followed the bier, and the Institut, which had refused to admit him when he was alive, now sent its representatives.

III

"An assemblage of contrasts" — so Restif de la Bretonne was described by Cubières-Palmézeau, his first biographer, who knew him well, and was indeed the only biographer who ever knew him at all. Grimm, another contemporary, a stolid Philistine but a critic of sound judgment, wrote similarly: "It is impossible to imagine a stranger complexity than the mind of Restif, with its extraordinary mixture of platitude and genius." This is a central fact about him, whether we are concerned with the man himself or with his work, which are indeed one, for the whole man is in his life-long flood of work and there is nothing in that work which does not plainly flow from the man.

That is the key to the opposing estimates, which, from his own time to ours, have been made of Restif. They have often thrown less light on him than on his critics. "That swine of a Restif!" Brunetière is said to have exclaimed, while Saintsbury, who might seem to many a conventionally academic English Brunetière, is full of tender admiration for Restif, finding him even on the moral side at worst "a sentimental philanthropist," setting him up on the one hand even above Laclos, whom he regards as unworthy of a place in the history of the French novel, and, on the other hand, even above Rousseau, who was "a blackguard." In his own day La Harpe and the Institut dismissed Restif as a writer "lacking in taste"; to-day Beaunier calls him "a great writer of a sort," and Funck-Brentano, very bold, "the greatest writer of the eighteenth century." It would be easy to bring forward many such flagrantly opposed judgments. From first to last there have been some who saw only the dunghill and others who saw only the gold. It needed a critic as impeccable as Baudelaire to point out that, whatever we may think of his work as a whole, there are some parts of it that form an imperishable element of the literature of his time.

Alike in his life and in his work, Restif combined an extravagantly ostentatious anxiety for morality with an equally extravagant love of sexual licence. He felt the strongest disgust and indignation at what he called "the abominable productions of the infamous and cruel Marquis de Sade." Yet he sought to combat them in later life by outdoing de Sade with another form of sadism, and *L'Anti-Justine* has been termed "the most outrageously libertine book in French," though its author hoped it might be read by wives to their husbands. This incoherent combination of virtue and vice to-day puzzles us, when we do not put it down to deliberate humbug, and even some readers of his own time may have been disconcerted when they discovered that Monsieur Nicolas' love of moral purity was not incompatible with a sympathetic acceptance of incest. Over and over again he falls in love with some young girl whom he later sees reason to suppose his own daughter, though it is significant that he seldom comes across a son. But the combination, in milder shapes, especially marked the eighteenth century, not only in France, but also, and at an even earlier date, in England, for it was demanded by the new vigorous lower middle-class public, then pushing itself to the front with untamed impulses which thirsted for respectability. We may find it well and typically represented, for instance, by Colley Cibber, of one of whose plays it is possible for a good critic to say that it is "genuinely moral," for another critic to say that its atmosphere is "immoral," and for a third to say that both are right. Later, Richardson elaborately combined the moral purpose with the sentimental and voluptuous atmosphere in the novels which he wrote for that lower middle-class public to which he himself belonged, and thereby exerted so enormous an influence in France. Since men possess both moral impulses and immoral impulses it may well be that it is precisely this harmonious combination of the two which gives to the eighteenth century in one of its numerous aspects, — "that atrocious eighteenth century," as Hugel used to call it,— the high rank it takes as a manifestation of the human spirit. Restif, whose devotion to the moral happiness of mankind we cannot doubt, and to whose own fundamental goodness all who knew him testify, yet lived and moved and had his whole being from first to last in an atmosphere which was, pungently and luridly, immoral. With his morbidly sensitive and impetuous temperament he was able to carry this seemingly incompatible combination to so high a point of extravagance that even the eighteenth century itself was sometimes shocked.

Restif possessed as an artist the special qualities which fitted him to reach his public. Beaunier has happily commented on the contrast between the head of Diderot with the fine mouth and the head of Restif with the fine eyes. That bold and inspired head of Diderot's belongs to a man who was for ever pouring forth new and brilliant ideas, and all the wrinkles are around the mouth. Restif's head — a blend of the Bourbon with the peasant, Monselet said — belonged to a man who was a spectator of Nature, with vision fixed on her with ruthless inquisitiveness, and all the wrinkles are around the eyes. He was always eager "to catch Nature on the run," as he said to Tilly, and what he had caught he was quick to transform into words, words which he was more concerned to gaze at himself than to show to others, so that his first diary was carved in "inscriptions" for his own secret enjoyment.

To Restif himself it was evidently clear that he was addressing a new audience and in a new way. Even in the notes to his early *Pied de Fanchette* he declared that "after the king in a monarchy, before all things in a republic, that which is the most sacred, most worthy of respect, most holy, is essentially the people." He wishes to make "the people" his heroes, and in support of this resolve he says: "Our fair-headed (and often red-headed) neighbours whom bawlers call ferocious, and sensible people magnanimous, I mean the English, treat in their books of all classes of people, and with equal respect." He evidently regarded himself as the pioneer in France of a new kind of writing already existing in England — one may indeed think of Defoe as the great artist and pioneer he was here following — and, as was usual with Restif, he pushed it to a new limit. In France, whatever the excesses of sentiment or licence in literature in Restif's time, there were inviolable rules of convention and decorum in language, inherited from the purification of language effected at the beginning of the century. Rousseau had embodied a new revolution in literature, a return to Nature and to the expression of natural emotion, but it is hardly possible to find a crude word even in his intimate letters. Crébillon *fils* discussed the erotic refinements of his time with complete freedom, and it was impossible for him to be vulgar. All those who accepted either Rousseau or Crébillon as master observed the same rules of dignified reticence. But Restif, as he told Tilly, had deliberately broken these rules. He had "emboldened the language to speak of everything." The enrichment due to that liberation from the fetters of the eighteenth century we largely owe to Restif.

This feature of Restif's work, which operated against him among the academic critics of his own day, has probably been the chief cause why some critics of a later day have assigned to him so high a place. The great masters of literature, — like Rabelais and Montaigne and Shakespeare and Landor and Huysmans and Proust and Joyce — have often possessed within themselves a plastic force by which, for good or for evil, they were impelled to mould language afresh, to invent new words, to spell old words afresh, to bend language into new constructions, and to make it possible to express what had never been expressed before. In this sense it can hardly be denied that, with all his weaknesses, Restif was, at the best, something of a great master.

It is true that, a few years later, another and very different enrichment of the French language for a while put Restif's achievement into the shade. A new movement, at the head of which stood Hugo, brought in an element of romantic magnificence which may well have made its champions look upon a Restif as "ignoble" and lead Hugo himself to go out of the way (as in *Les Misérables*) to disparage Restif. But when a little later Balzac appeared it became clear, and has often been pointed out, that Restif had been his forerunner, as later it was seen he had pioneered Zola. At the same time it also became clear that Restif went back to Marivaux, who happened indeed to be a master in the epistolary fiction which Restif cultivated, and Marivaux's importance is too often misunderstood or under-emphasised. Marivaux, too, in his own different way and with his own unlike temperament, was a pioneer. His sympathies had carried him into fields of observation outside his own class; with a minute and sensitive realism he had described the lives and characters of people of the peasantry and lower middle-class. So that when Restif by taste and training turned away from the heroes and heroines of the drawing-room and the boudoir, who largely occupied the fictional field of the century, it was Marivaux at its very beginning that he reached, — even though, as was natural from the different approach, he disliked Marivaux, — and *Le Paysan Perverti* owed its title to *Le Paysan Parvenu.* Therewith, for all clear-eyed critics, Restif's position became assured. It was recognised that, whatever his extravagances and his eccentricities, he had his well-marked and permanent place in one of the great streams of French literature.

Monsieur Nicolas, written after long preparation, when Restif was at the highest point of his matured powers, is by all critics accepted as his chief claim to permanent remembrance. It represents him fully on every side, good and bad. Here we may see, again and again, how he "emboldened language to speak of everything," and when we contemplate the pages of his original text, printed by his own hands, we may trace innumerable personal idiosyncrasies of expression in typography which escape the translator, as well as his love for new words and new spellings, like, for instance, "garson" in place of "garçon," for, as he said (quite truly), this word is a diminutive of "gars." By this plastic force on language he belongs to the class of French masters of literature, with Rabelais at their head, which has later included the Goncourts and Huysmans and Léon Bloy and Joseph Delteil. This same force he exerts also in transforming into speech the things he has seen or felt, so that in his pages we may meet with experiences, even common and familiar experiences, which seem never to have been put into speech before. That is one of the secrets of his fresh vivid direct manner. When he is at the best in narrative — swift, easy, flexible, familiar — he belongs less to his own age than to ours.

This mastery of speech has its part in his power of bringing before us the intimate middle-class life of his time. All now recognise his value in this field; here indeed he is unique, and the claim he thus makes on the gratitude of posterity can never be exaggerated. Elsewhere we seek in vain for pictures of the everyday life of the people of his time, in country and in town, which even remotely approach Restif's in living intimacy of detail. And while such pictures are scattered through a large part of his work they are nowhere better represented than in *Monsieur Nicolas.* It was Restif's distinction that he stood apart from the highly civilised life of the eighteenth century and approached it from the outside. When we think of that life and its typical representatives we think of a highly socialised and conventionalised existence, carried on, and in literature represented, by aristocrats and bourgeois within an urban environment. Even Rousseau, who brought a stream of youthful blood into this rather anaemic world, and created it anew, was the child of a city, however remote. But there was no sort of urbanity about Restif. A peasant and a plebeian, he approached this spectacle greedily and yet shyly, and devoured it with all the fresh and undisciplined appetite of his primitive and yet sensitive temperament. And because he had a strain of genius which held him true to that temperament, his writings retain an imperishable vitality.

With the autobiographical claim for *Monsieur Nicolas,* on which Restif insisted most of all, he may again be justified;

but this time we must speak with some caution. His place is high, but we do well to hesitate before making that place, as some would have it, supreme. Even if Restif had achieved a perfect autobiography, we should still have to bear in mind that men who are incomparably greater figures in the world have also written the inner history of their own lives. But *Monsieur Nicolas* is far from being a perfect autobiography. The impulsive and capricious Restif allowed himself to be drawn in all sorts of directions away from the main aim when he was writing it and never gave himself a chance of retracing random steps and starting afresh in a straighter line. Thus there are perpetual digressions.

A yet more serious matter is that, while we cannot question the natural spontaneity of his narrative, we can never absolutely trust his ability, or even his strict determination, to distinguish between truth and fiction. All his life he had been writing fiction that was verging on truth and truth that was verging on fiction; he could not but continue to do so even in an autobiography. His complacent credulity was great; he was easily imposed on by others, and in his turn he found it easy to try to impose on others. The fantastic table of descent of the Restif family he put forward as the production of his grandfather, but he printed it on three separate occasions in the course of his life, and when his high descent was questioned he once indignantly declared that the evidence was preserved in the Bibliothèque Royale. Here and elsewhere we are left a little doubtful as to how far Restif was deceiving others, and how far he was himself deceived. Bloch would have us believe that Restif wrote much more veraciously than Rousseau. It is true that Restif, with his mania for "inscriptions," could often refer to exact dates and facts in his past life, while Rousseau, trusting mostly to memory, was often a little astray, for memory is never absolutely trustworthy. But we are always sure that Rousseau is conscientious, and the little sins of youth which his tender conscience impels him to set forth in all their heinous details would never have been known if he had not recorded them. Restif is more anxious to soothe his vanity than to confess his sins, and we sometimes know, and can often guess, that he is toning down his misdeeds — when he recognises them as such — or veiling them in sentiment. So it is that he fails to explain how he fled from Auxerre in 1755 before the indignation of Madame Parangon when she discovered how he had deceived her. We note, too, the complacent credulity with which he so easily comes upon illegitimate children of his own in the most unlikely places. And sometimes — as also seems to have happened to Casanova — he is clearly romancing altogether. We may recall, for instance, his narrative of the supposed scene in the Park at Dijon, when he details at length the conversation he claims to have casually overheard, which revealed that Madame Parangon had secretly given birth to a child of which he was himself the father. The claims that have been made for Restif's scrupulous truthfulness can hardly be maintained.

Yet notwithstanding all the defects, even glaring defects, which may be found in *Monsieur Nicolas,* whether as a work of literary art or as a trustworthy document, its right to stand among the great autobiographies, even although not in the first rank, may well be maintained. We really do here possess, as Restif himself asserted, a wonderful piece of "natural history." *Monsieur Nicolas* really is the veracious story, told in the most vivid and spontaneous and sometimes brilliant fashion, of an extraordinary man — however far from being admirable — in his intimate reactions with the world in which he lived. It is veracious in a sense deeper than literal truthfulness because it truly brings before us the whole man uncompromisingly, even in his credulity and his vanity and his spitefulness, as well as in his sudden impulses of generosity or humility; it is true to Nature even when it is not true to fact.

The other writings, numerous as they are, of Restif de la Bretonne may be forgotten. *Monsieur Nicolas* will remain, the fascinating picture of the ordinary life of a remarkable age, and, against that background, the living picture of an extraordinary man.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

THE
PROSPECTUS OF MONSIEUR NICOLAS
1791

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SUBSCRIBERS AND THE AUTHOR AND WITH EACH OTHER

I PROPOSE to print 450 Sets of *The Human Heart Unveiled*, containing 300 signatures, in XXIV Parts, with 150 Plates, by means of a subscription of ten louis each from 200 Persons only, making in all a sum of 48,000 livres.

The price of each set will be 10 louis; the subscribers will be entitled to two sets each; so that, by disposing of one set at the published price, they will have the remaining copy free.

This is their first advantage.

Each signature will cost,

Paper	12 l.*
Printing	36
Shop Charges	2
Total for 300 signatures at 50 livres each	15,000 l.
Each double plate	200 l.
Printing of the same	20
Paper	10
Total for plates at 230 l. each	34,500 l.
Grand Total	49,500 l.

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*The "livre" has no connection with the English pound; it was the ancestor of the modern *franc*, and, as we see, 24 livres went to the golden *louis*. The 49,500 *livres* at which Restif estimated the cost of *Monsieur Nicolas* would be over 544,000 francs in present value. [Ed. note.]

The Author will print 50 Sets for himself at ten louis, making 12,000 livres. He will have the onus of printing and the rights of all highly placed persons who reject them.

As soon as the edition of 450 Sets is completed, the Author will make over the Work and the Plates to the 200 Subscribers, that they may print on their own account an edition of three or four thousand Copies, as was done with certain other Works by the same Author. They will have all rights in this edition and in any other, the Author reserving nothing whatever for himself in these. As the expense of engraving will be saved, since the blocks will be executed so that 6000 impressions can be taken off, it is clear that there can be no risk and that this edition must show a profit. This second advantage offered to subscribers is very considerable (almost 2000 livres) but the author feels he owes them this recognition for their advance subscriptions.

The Subscribers' conditions will be determined by an *Agreement* between them, which will establish their common ownership and equal rights, save in the case of an express renunciation of the profit on the large edition of three or four thousand and on any other editions. One of these gentlemen, living in a suitable locality, will be the Agent: he will be elected by his fellow subscribers; he will receive the printed sheets from the Author, which will be delivered by the sheet or by the *Part* as he prefers. The Agent will receive their subscriptions from the subscribers and will only pay the author a quarter of each subscription.

In consequence of the advantages which have just been set forth, I think I may myself choose my 200 subscribers; thus the Public will know that those whose Names follow have only accepted my proposal, and that they did not offer themselves.

List of the 200 subscribers to M. NICOLAS or The Human Heart Unveiled

1. *The King.*
2. *The Queen.*
3. *Louis-Xav. Prince of France.*
4. *Charles-Phil.* " "
5. *Louis-Ph.* " "
6. *The Ambassadors of Russia.*
7. " " *Vienna.*
8. " " *Spain.*
9. " " *England.*
10. " " *Sardinia.*
11. " " *Naples.*
12. " " *Prussia.*
13. " " *Portugal.*
14. " " *Holland.*
15. " " *Poland.*
16. " " *Denmark.*
17. " " *Sweden.*
18. " " *Bavaria.*
19. " " *Venice.*
20. " " *Switzerland.*

Cantons:

21. *Zurich.*
22. *Berne.*
23. *Lucerne.*
24. *Uri.*
25. *Schewitz.*
26. *Undewald.*
27. *Zug.*

Cantons:

28. *Glaris.*
29. *Bale.*
30. *Fribourg.*
31. *Soleure.*
32. *Schaffouze.*
33. *Appenzell.*
34. *Confederated States.*
35. *The Envoys of Saxony.*
36. " " *Deux-Ponts.*
37. " " *Baden.*
38. " " *Hesse.*
39. " " *Florence.*
40. " " *Genoa.*
41. " " *Parma.*
42. " " *Cologne.*
43. " " *Mayence.*
44. " " *Trèves.*
45. " " *Liège.*
46. " " *Geneva.*
47. " " *Malta.*
48. " " *Netherlands.*
49. " " *Saxony.*
50. *Départ. du Nord.* Douai.
51. " *Côtes du Nord.* St-Brieuc.
52. " *Finistère.* Quimper.
53. " *Jura.* Lons-le-Saulnier.

54.	*Départ.*	*Ardennes.*	Charleville.
55.	„	*Lozère.*	Mende.
56.	„	*Cantal.*	St-Flour.
57.	„	*Puy-de-Dôme.*	Clermont.
58.	„	*Vosges.*	Epinal.
59.	„	*Hautes-Pyrénées.*	Tarbes.
60.	„	*Basses-Pyrénées.*	Pau.
61.	„	*Pyrén.-orient.*	Perpignan.
62.	„	*Hautes-Alpes.*	Chorges.
63.	„	*Basses-Alpes.*	Digne.
64.	„	*Calvados.*	Caen.
65.	„	*Landes.*	Mt-Marsan.
66.	„	*Côte d'Or.*	Dijon.
67.	„	*Pas-de-Calais.*	Arras
68.	„	*Manche.*	Coutances.
69.	„	*Morbihan.*	Vannes.
70.	„	*Seine-inférieure.*	Rouen.
71.	„	*Seine-et-Oise.*	Versailles.
72.	„	*Seine-et-Marne.*	Melun.
73.	„	*l'Oise.*	Beauvais.
74.	„	*l'Aisne.*	Soissons.
75.	„	*Marne.*	Chalons.
76.	„	*H. Marne.*	Chaumont.
77.	„	*l'Aube.*	Troyes.
78.	„	*l'Eure.*	Evreux.
79.	„	*Eure-et-Loir.*	Chartres.
80.	„	*l'Yonne.*	Auxerre.
81.	„	*Haute-Loire.*	Le Puy.
82.	„	*Loire-Inf.*	Nantes.
83.	„	*Sarthe.*	Le Mans.
84.	„	*Mayenne.*	Laval.
85.	*Départ.*	*Maine-et-Loire.*	Angers.
86.	„	*Loir-et-Cher.*	Blois.
87.	„	*Nièvre.*	Nevers.
88.	„	*Haute-Vienne.*	Limoges.
89.	„	*la Vienne.*	Poitiers.
90.	„	*Creuse.*	Guéret.
91.	„	*Deux-Sèvres.*	Niort.
92.	„	*Indre.*	Chateauroux.
93.	„	*Indre-et-Loire.*	Tours.
94.	„	*Allier.*	Moulins.
95.	„	*Loiret.*	Orléans.
96.	„	*Cher.*	Bourges.
97.	„	*Orne.*	Alençon.
98.	„	*Ille-et-Vilaine.*	Rennes.
99.	„	*Somme.*	Amiens.
100.	„	*Gironde.*	Bordeaux.
101.	„	*H-Garonne.*	Toulouse.
102.	„	*Lot.*	Cahors.
103.	„	*Lot-et-Garonne.*	Agen.
104.	„	*Dordogne.*	Périgueux.
105.	„	*Corrèze.*	Tulle.
106.	„	*Aveyron.*	Rhodez.
107.	„	*Gers.*	Auch.
108.	„	*Tarn.*	Castres.
109.	„	*Ariège.*	Tarascon.
110.	„	*Charente.*	Angoulême.
111.	„	*Char-inf.*	Saintes.
112.	„	*Vend.*	Font-le-C.
113.	„	*Rhone-et-Loire.*	Lyon.
114.	„	*Bouches-du-Rho.*	Aix.
115.	„	*Haute-Saône.*	Vezoul.
116.	„	*Saône-et-L.*	Macon.
117.	„	*Doubs.*	Besançon.

118. *Départ. Gard.* Nimes.
119. „ *Ardèche.* Privas.
120. „ *Isère.* Grenoble.
121. „ *l'Ain.* Bourg.
122. „ *la Drome.* Valence.
123. „ *Var.* Toulon.
124. „ *l'Hérault.* Montpellier.
125. „ *l'Aude.* Carcassonne.
126. „ *Haut-Rhin.* Colmar.
127. „ *Bas-Rhin.* Strasbourg.
128. „ *Moselle.* Metz.
129. „ *Meurthe.* Nancy.
130. „ *Meuse.* Bar-le-Duc.
131. „ *Paris.* Paris.
132. *Mm. Loménie.*
133. „ *Pethion.*
134. „ *Barnave.*
135. „ *Mauri.*
136. „ *Robertspierre.*
137. „ *Noailles.*
138. „ *Mathieu Montm.*
139. „ *Vadier.*
140. „ *Mercier.*
141. „ *Madame Beauharnais.*
142. „ *Anacharsis Cloots.*
143. „ *Toustain-Richeb.*
144. „ *De Senones.*
145. „ *Rœderer.*
146. „ *Liancourt.*
147. „ *Desessarts.*
148. „ *Larive.*
149. *Mlle Desgarsins.*
150. *Mme Merci de Sa.*
151. *M. De Mailli.*
152. *Mm. Malherbe.*
153. „ *Pell. de Morfont.*
154. „ *De Clerm.-Tonn.*
155. *Mlle Sainval cad.*
156. *Mm. Malouet.*
157. „ *Beaumarchais.*
158. „ *La Reynière fils.*
159. „ *De Rochambeau.*
160. „ *Bralle.*
161. *Mme Esprit.*
162. „ *Brul-Sil-G.*
163. „ *de Luines.*
164. „ *de Beausset.*
165. „ *Vestris.*
166. *Dorf. D. du Th. Fr.*
167. *Dubuisson-Proco.*
168. *De Laval.*
169. *Fauch. év. du. Cal.*
170. *L'év. de Toulouse.*
171. *Restif de Grenoble.*
172. *Mgrs. de Bordeaux.*
173. „ *de Marseilles.*
174. „ *d'Aix.*
175. „ *d'Avignon.*
176. „ *de Cahors.*
177. „ *de Montauban.*
178. „ *de Saintes.*
179. „ *de la Rochelle.*
180. „ *de Limoges.*
181. „ *de Clerm.-Au.*
182. „ *de Tours.*
183. „ *de Besançon.*
184. „ *de Bourges.*
185. „ *de Nevers.*
186. „ *de Cha.-sur-M.*

187. Mgrs. de Chal.-Saône.
188. „ de Macon.
189. „ de Dijon.
190. „ de Strasbourg.
191. „ de Mans.
192. „ de Rouen.
193. „ de Caen.
194. Mgrs. de Nantes.
195. „ de Rennes.
196. „ de Lyon.
197. „ d'Arras.
198. „ de Douai.
199. „ d'Orléans.
200. „ de Metz.

Persons, and less well known Towns, not mentioned by name, may procure two sets post free for the price of the subscription, by applying to the Author.

I have given the names of the subscribers I have chosen, in the belief that I am offering them a real gift. But if, after receiving the prospectus, there are some among them who have no desire to subscribe, I beg them to arrange for one of their acquaintances to take their place; or to let me know, post free, that they give up all claim whatsoever to the advantage offered.

Here follows the form of subscription.

If preferred, subscriptions may be paid by the half instead of by the quarter to the Agent.

Receipt for One Quarter.

RECEIVED from the elected Agent the sum of 60 liv. being one fourth of the subscription for *Monsieur Nicolas* at 10 *louis* for two Sets, to be delivered.

This day of . . .

Restif

Author's Note
to
THE FIRST EIGHT PARTS
of
THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED
(1796)

I DECLARE *to puritans in that sham morality which makes all virtue lie in abstinence from love and women, that I defy them in this book. Constrained to tell the truth, and immolating myself in the service of my age and of posterity, I give nothing but faithful representations of fact, and expose the progress of the passions, not in their verisimilitude, which is so often deceitful, but in their reality. I know well what prompts the hypocrite and libertine to inveigh against such truth as there is in my other works; hypocrisy makes the former rant and bawl, as cats and tigresses and panthers growl and tear when we pleasure them. And for the latter, a real antipathy to love and women moves him; this vile contradiction, debauched in youth by such as Duchauffour, D'Elbeuf and V——tte, cannot tolerate Nature; and so protests against sweet scenes which have no charm for one whose secret pleasure is in the erotics of* Justine, *the* Boudoir, *and such-like infamies, wherein he finds his filthy thoughts and cruel fantasies realised.*

For the rest—despite the charm of youth and beauty, of romantic sentiment and artless situations, at that age when development is just complete and everything is enchanted, new, vivid, exquisite—the scenes presented in the first eight parts are not the most interesting. In the flower of age the touch is surer, and the later parts will grow in interest, either by reason of the Personages introduced or by the novelty of sentiments which have always existed but which no one has ever set themselves to depict. Youth and its passions have been staged as alone lovely and amiable, while maturity, which has such need for consolation, has been almost totally neglected. Or if the passions of later life have been portrayed, it has been to overwhelm them with ridicule; one might have thought that the authors, themselves secure from growing old, sought to instil despair and anguish into the heart of Maturity. But their diatribes, though supposed to be useful, are far from being strictly true! In this unveiling of the Human Heart, man's real progress through every stage of life can be observed; and the truth of the terrible law that, save in some civilisation very different from the existing one, age brings a new vice, a new infirmity for every year, and every year it hardens as do the bones and sinews. The same things no longer make the same impression, and others must be substituted: love and the pleasures of youth must be replaced by consequence and esteem, founded on a life not only proof against reproach, but meritorious and kind.

Here I will insert a short excerpt from the Gazette Nationale *of the 22nd of Brumaire, year 5, relative to Diderot's book entitled* Jacques le Fataliste*: "There has been too much bitterness and affectation in the criticism of certain verbal excesses which the philosopher Diderot thought permissible in a work he never meant for the printer. It has been made an excuse for an attack upon philosophy, which in fact has no more connection with Diderot's witticisms than has true virtue with the canting scruples of present-day Charlatans. We would remind those so chaste persons, who claim that one should only write for mothers and magistrates, that Peoples only gain* *in external decency what they lose in real purity. Let these virtuous writers, to whom everything, except their own revolting intrigues, is a crime, condescend to stoop so low as to study our Writers of the Middle Ages, and then to read the* Moyen de Parvenir, *the* Contes de Bonaventure Desperriers *and many such. On every page of the latter they will find things to scandalise their modesty which did not in the least alarm our forefathers, who yet were more virtuous than ourselves. The ear is chastity's last refuge: only after it has been driven from the heart does it retreat thither; and only among the writers of a vitiated people, with an imagination drenched in obscenity, does one find this fastidious evasion of any phrase that may stimulate memory. Suspicious censors! would you be thought honest? Then thunder against the frightful depravity of our morals; denounce to the whole Nation the scandalous protection under cover of which it extends its ravages from day to day, and leave the empty criticism of words to trivial minds."*

At the beginning of my first volume, the printing of which was begun under the Monarchy and during the session of the Constituent Assembly, I entered the names of Subscribers from the two parties: and because of my love for truth, I shall not now remove them. I will only substitute for a King and a Queen, and for certain other Personages who no longer exist:

1. *The Directoire-Exécutif.*
2. *The most patriotic members of the two Councils.*
3. *The newly added departments.*
4. *The envoys of friendly Powers only.*

By this means all that I had set down will stand.

I should add that the Philosophy of Monsieur Nicolas, *in three Parts, comprising the* Physics, *was to be an appendix to the Work called* The Human Heart Unveiled; *and that there are three more parts to complete this*

Philosophy, one concerning Ethics; *one concerning* Religion; *and one concerning* Politics.

This information was necessary.

P.S.—Since I have been urged to publish The Human Heart Unveiled, *those who have been persuading me to it have said again and again: "At least you will have the pleasures of fame and of your achievement." I confess that to me this does not seem a suitable way to regard a work of this character! So I am to enjoy my own fame, while dissecting myself and displaying myself naked to my fellow-citizens; exposing my vices and my failings, with at most a few gleams of virtue? Those who can talk to me of fame are beyond my comprehension! In truth my motive is public utility; but who will realise this apart from myself? And if this excuse is taken from me, I have only shame to expect. The birds of prey and brigands of literature will fall upon me! They will have every chance to rend me! I shall not have a word to answer, having dared to publish in my lifetime what should have been postponed until after my death. They will slander me, although there is no need for that to triumph over me; but it is a pleasure they will not forego. . . . I foresee it all, and yet I am going to publish! For another and more urgent evil drives me. . . . Ah! why should one desire length of days when the evening of life is darkened by so many ills! Here indeed that enemy of mine may well repeat the words he used so wrongly when speaking of my* Physique, *of which the publication is my only comfort in present difficulties: "Only despair can account for the appearance of such a Work." Yes, despair, and intolerable suffering make me publish the first eight parts of my moral anatomy; yes, misfortune alone makes me seek to gain means for the completion of this Work, of which the full value will not be realised till after my death, and the extinction of those ardent passions, which I shall be found to have abused too roughly.*

Farewell, Reader. *Some among you will do me justice. I have made two men of opposite temperament read the eight parts already printed, the one phlegmatic and the other ardent. The former found them interesting and did not discourage me; the latter was swept away: truth held him enthralled, he spent nights with them, he sobbed and wept; his praise was excessive, but consoling. . . . You shall judge for yourself, Reader! I deliver myself over to you to win a few more days' subsistence, as a condemned Englishman sells his body.* Omnia jubet paupertas et facere, et pati! . . . *For the rest, I have not long to live; yesterday, the 27 brumaire, year 5, I was nearly assassinated by a certain Ettugaled,* the son-in-law of one of the heroines in the* Contemporaines. *It was evening, and in a deserted street; in Lyons it would have been the end. Furthermore, I have three mortal infirmities. Of what value is my life, and why should I regret it when want or suffering take it from me? All my work, though doubled, has not sufficed for seven years to pay my debts; when it comes to profit, there is nothing.*

But before I strip myself in front of you, Reader, *I must give my reasons for doing so.*

---

*This was evidently the son of the printer Delaguette, one of those with whom Restif got into trouble by his imprudence in introducing real people into the *Contemporaines.* [Ed. note.]

DEDICATION

TO MYSELF

(1777)

DEAR SELF AND BEST OF FRIENDS, MOST POWERFUL OF MY protectors, and my most immediate sovereign; accept the homage offered in this my self-dissection; at once a thank-offering for all the services you have done me and an incentive to serve me still.

You are my best friend; sometimes you have betrayed me, but always less in malice than in error, and I do not regard such slips as real injuries from you to me. You thought to benefit me, and when in the event you found the opposite result, the grief you underwent was so lively and so real that it proved the excellence of your intention.

You are my most powerful protector, dear Self. When you have wished to serve me, what zeal you showed, what energy! Nothing could dishearten you; you broke down every barrier. How artfully you would win the good-will of my fellows! How skilfully intrigue their interest! If you did not succeed it was because success was impossible; and often, by a mere act of will, you have given me wealth by ordering my desires: that being better a hundred times than any pleasure.

You are my wisest counsellor. When have I been imprudent and you not warned me, saying: "I am going to make a fool of myself!" How often have you not cried: "Beware!" All the good that I have done, I have done because I listened to you, because I went in and communed with you; all that I have done wrong I have done through leaving too much to chance, through not deliberating enough with you, and with your most intimate friend, our conscience, with whom I sometimes get you into trouble.

And when I am doing some service to my fellows, do you not tell me: "Do it nobly and freely; it costs no more and the favour is worth double. Be obliging, and you will surely be obliged in turn. Friendship is a field we sow; if you do harm, you will be repaid two-fold; vengeance is as a falling body, gathering impetus on its way?" How often when some wrong has been done me, have you not prevented me from getting into a rage; and from avenging myself otherwise than in the fury of my thought? Thus would the fire pass out of me and, when I was calmer, you would hold up the mirror of prudence, wherein the consequences of my anger were depicted in terrifying fashion. Then you would say to me: "Do you wish you had done what you recently thought of doing?" "No, no!" I would answer. And I never failed to profit by this wise lesson.

For a long time now you have urged me to take up my pen and write my own story, and these are your reasons: "You are ill-known though well-known, for you have been slandered; therefore you must justify yourself by opening your heart to the public like a book, and saying to friends and enemies alike: 'Read me; I myself have become a book, who have made so many in which you have read of others. But when I presented those others to you, I covered them with a veil. Myself I show unveiled; I am *Monsieur Nicolas*; I shall disguise nothing; I shall dissect the ordinary man as J. J. Rousseau dissected the great man, but in no servile imitation of him. He did not give me the idea for this book; self gave it to myself.'* "And that," you said to me, dear *self*, "is how you will begin. Then, in a few lines, you must give some idea of the work. I was born an author; all my life I have loved writing, and my story will flow the more easily for it: I have two aids in its composition possessed by hardly any other man; my notebooks, which go back to 1749, and my letters to friends of both sexes. The first of my letters dates from the age of eighteen and a half. My story will depend on memory only until then. Many of the letters have appeared in one or other of my works; but their interest will be increased by being placed in my own story; for there they will reveal the great amount of truth in my romances. These, indeed, do not deserve that name save in its primary signification, meaning no more than any work written in the vulgar tongue as distinguished from all other books, which were in Latin or Greek. Thus the Gospel in French was called the Gospel written in Romance; a sermon in French was a romance; a French song was a romance, a French history was a romance. In the same way it is a romance I put before you, my honoured reader; but be assured that you will find nothing in it that is not true, and recorded in letters which were actually written. There is no need to invent; my life has been full of incidents which will engage your interest, for I was ever exempt from three vices which consume and stupefy other men; eating and drinking, gaming and idleness. Every moment of my time has been occupied by work, or by the noblest, the one truly absorbing

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*If the Dedication really dates from 1777, this passage (as Liseux has pointed out) must have been added some years later, for Rousseau's *Confessions* were published in 1782; it was in the following year that Restif, evidently stimulated by Rousseau's work, began the actual composition of *Monsieur Nicolas*. [Ed. note.]

passion: love. I loved my parents, virtue and truth; and pleasure overmuch at times, but never vice."

Well, dear *self*! I will print all this in deference to you.

Peace be with you.

INTRODUCTION

I UNDERTAKE TO GIVE YOU IN ITS ENTIRETY THE LIFE OF ONE OF your fellows, without concealing anything either of his thoughts or actions. Now this man, whose character I am going to dissect, can only be myself. Without having read Montaigne, I yet know that he said: "All things considered, no one can talk about himself without losing thereby; for if he censors himself, others will believe more than he owns to, and if he praises himself, not one word of his self-commendation will be credited." Nevertheless I shall persist in my project; it is not my life that I write, but the history of a man.

There are two examples of my enterprise: the *Confessions* of the bishop of Hippo, and those of the citizen of Geneva. I have much in common with Augustine, less with J. J. Rousseau; and I shall imitate neither the one nor the other. I have proof that J. J. Rousseau constructed a romance, and Augustine's *Confessions* are really no more than an apologue. But for my project, exactitude and sincerity are absolutely necessary, for I propose to dissect the human heart according to my own consciousness and plumb the uttermost depths of my self. I am not writing my *Confessions*, I am *unveiling* the *Springs of the Human Heart.* Vanish, Nicolas-Edme, and let only the man remain! But it is none the less true that it is Nicolas-Edme who immolates himself and, in place of his sick body, bequeathes his vitiated soul to moralists, to be dissected for the use of their own and future generations. I will be truthful even when truth exposes me to scorn; this is a case for braving everything or hiding everything; the middle way would be contemptible.

I was born with lively passions which have brought me happiness and unhappiness. Looked at from the one point of view, no king or favourite of fortune has had more pleasure than myself. If, on the contrary, my privations are considered and my sufferings, who was ever more pitiable! Alas! despised, persecuted, betrayed, condemned by poverty to the rudest, most incessant toil; loaded with insults, set below my inferiors, made unhappy on every count through women, in want for a long time even of necessities, trembling for my liberty, fearing for my life, tempted by the terrible thought of suicide; with no pleasure, or rather no consolation, save in the prospect of a near destruction: such has been my lot, nor is this horrible picture exaggerated.

If my qualities should be scanned, and an enumeration made of them, it will be found that I have always been frugal, industrious, economical, and tender to excess for others; that I have been neither gambler nor drinker nor glutton; that, modest in regard to myself, I have blushed when praised. I have often been the strictest critic of my Books, and sometimes the most enlightened; I have often reduced my earnings, saying: I do not deserve so much.

But, on the other hand, I have been passionate, brutal and savage; impatient of the yoke, harsh and imperious; sacrificing all to my frenzy for women and committing criminal excesses to satisfy it; respecting neither modesty nor decency; exposing myself, exposing hearts still pure, to the frightful consequences of debauchery, and hurling into the foul pit young girls who had no more than approached it. At times, a miser to the point of inhumanity, I refuse a trifle; and then lavish with the pusillanimity which lets itself be plucked, I cowardly pay vice; bashful through pride, greedy for praise while seeming to disdain it; careless and lavish through laziness; cynical through a superb opinion of my own worth; ridiculously foppish; jealous, envious, caustic, clownish, impudent; what faults were mine! . . . And yet I have sometimes gone without necessities for the poor; I have often been kind in secret; I have helped and succoured my enemies and they have never known it; I have aided my friends in the name of people who never thought of them, because I preferred to be a friend rather than a benefactor; I have eased the last moments of a dying man by pretending to be charged with a reconciliation, which I afterwards effected; I have saved the honour of a few girls and of three women; I have conquered my strongest passions; and have made a habit of reporting unkind speeches kindly, in order to soothe hostility. But also I have made quarrels among my friends through imprudence and thoughtlessness; I have lied in the accents of truth; I have insulted women and young girls with loose expressions. . . .

Incredible labyrinth of the human heart! O chaos, comprehending all contradiction, who can unravel you? I . . . in myself. I will hide nothing, Reader; neither vice, nor crime, nor turpitude nor obscenity! Yes, I will confess everything, even to the secret motives which make me write my story. I intend at least to have the merit of astounding by my extreme sincerity. Be patient,* my Reader and my friend (for, reading me, you will

*Télos oràn.

grow fond of me, and perhaps esteem me in spite of my faults); I ask this justice of you: do not judge me on isolated facts but only after you have read the whole. I offer you a book of natural history which ranks me higher than Buffon; a book of philosophy which sets me beside Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu; I will describe the life of a natural man who fears nothing except deceit. I leave this pattern to future races. Such portraiture is not easy! I have myself abandoned it some twenty times.

My original motive was self enhancement. Spoilt by some few successes which won me a little flattery, I thought myself a personage. That mistake only lasted six months. When I came to my senses, I drew at least this profit from my passing madness, that it gave me the idea for a production as vast as it was serviceable and philosophic, of which the subject could be none other than myself. For the plan that I conceived was to unveil the motives of the human heart; and how could I judge exactly the springs of action in another? Every moment I might be mistaken; and as I myself could never be sure of what I had conjectured, how should I be worthy of another's confidence? But by describing what I have done, by giving an account of what I have felt, by a strict scrutiny of my motives—by, so to speak, anatomising myself—perhaps, through this painful self-dissection, I might achieve a gift of real value to my nation; a book to inform my own times, and profit a posterity which may have no one so courageously truthful. For I live in an age fruitful in extraordinary men and extraordinary events, and this sustains the heat of my resolve. Also my life has been very full, both of ordinary and everyday occurrences, with which every one will be at home, and of extraordinary and singular happenings, calculated to keep curiosity awake by wonder and surprise. But (I repeat) truth must overcome the shyest scruple. Those who know me may give me the lie, but let them declare themselves if they want anything explained or justified.

Monsieur Nicolas will give the history and the key to my Works, for all the adventures related in these are founded on fact; but some disguise was necessary, either because they were my own, or concerned another. Here truth is stripped of fable's tinsel, and the veil of fiction is torn away.

The *Vie de Mon Père*, published in 1778, contains all that concerns my family; I will not repeat it, but I cannot absolve myself from correcting the genealogy placed at the end of the third edition. It is not altogether a pungent jest of my grandfather, Restif *the Harsh*, as he was called; the latter generations are true enough.

To follow this extract it must be understood that Pierre was a wit and man of pleasure, who sacrificed his quite considerable fortune to a desire for social success. He had married a relative of President Cœurderoi and entertained the quality from the neighbouring villages. As Pierre was a commoner, they would often talk of genealogies at his table; he would listen impatiently, and sometimes retort with irony, for quizzing had not yet come into fashion. One day when he was entertaining largely (it was the patronal festival at Nitry) a certain Comte d'Arcy took offence at this, and Pierre, who doubtless had expected this, said in reply: "I only criticise your genealogy because my own goes back further, has stronger proof, is more illustrious, more varied and better substantiated."

"Let us see it," exclaimed the gentlemen. "It must be his wife's," said the one who had taken offence. "No, it is my own, that of the family of *Restif*, or *Pertinax*, as it was called before the French language was used in public records." "Let us see it!" repeated the guests. Pierre left the table, climbed the double ladder of his little library and from the highest shelf took down some rusty, gnawed old parchments, written in Gothic character up to the penultimate generation. These he placed upon the table. The hunting gentry, though only half through dinner, seized upon them and recognised their incontestable antiquity, but could not read them. Pierre called his son Edme, who could readily decipher all ancient writings, and told him to read with a clear enunciation. The young man was prepared: he stammered a little, but finally read as follows:

MY GENEALOGY

FOREWORD BY THE HAND OF PIERRE R . . .

Great ones of the land! You who vaunt your rank, your birth, and the noble blood which flows in your veins, read the Genealogy of this poor wight whom you look upon with the insulting arrogance of the noble for the commoner. This tree has been carefully preserved in his family; and it was an inviolable law that each descendant should inscribe his name upon the antique vellum roll wherein his ancestors had written; the which was kept wrapped about a wooden cylinder and shut in a polished casket of walnut wood.

PIERRE PERTINAX, otherwise Restif, descends in the direct line from the emperor *Pertinax*, who succeeded to Commodius and was succeeded by Didius Julianus, elected emperor because he was rich enough to pay the price the Soldiers had set upon the sovereign power.

Now the emperor Helvius Pertinax had a posthumous son, also named Helvius Pertinax, whose death was ordained by Caracalla, solely because he was the son of an emperor; but a freedman, who bore the first name of his master, generously gave himself up to the assassins, and successfully deceived them—a worthy action, and one mentioned, no doubt, in the history of the time, but known to us only through the genealogy of Pierre Pertinax.

Having escaped from death, Helvius Pertinax fled to the Apennines, where he lived in obscurity.

One day, while exploring the caves and rocks of his wild retreat, he saw a young slave driving goats before her into a cavern. He followed her unseen, and came upon her steps into the innermost recesses of the cave. But what was his surprise to hear another woman address the slave, and to recognise the voice as that of Didia Juliana, daughter of his father's successor. She also was in exile through Caracalla, and all Rome thought she had been murdered by the monster after he had violated her. Cautiously, for fear of frightening her, he made himself known, and these two comrades in misfortune were charmed to meet again, realising that together they could improve their lot. Helvius asked Didia Juliana how she had escaped the tyrant, and she answered: "My lord, first I was ravished, and then just as Caracalla was going to disembowel me, his mother Julia arrived by chance and distracted him for a moment. I seized the opportunity to escape. But I was seen by one of my own maid-servants, who ran quickly to inform the emperor. He left his mother; the room was dark; the traitress had been stripped by the soldiers of the guard, and raped as I had been. Caracalla took her for me, seized her by the hair and, without hearing what she had to say, slit her belly with a single stroke. A soldier cut off her head, and the carcass was forthwith thrown to the lions and tigers of the Circus menagerie. I escaped from the Palace with the help of a centurion; a faithful slave wanted to share my fate, so we left Rome together and journeyed through Italy until we came to this place, where I gave birth to that child asleep upon the moss. That is my story." Pertinax was touched; and as his hut was more comfortable than the cave, he led Didia Juliana to it, gave her suitable garments and wedded her.

Thus their names, inscribed in the Latin tongue by their own hands, are at the head of the family tree. And here is my translation of the old illegible original.

We, Helvius Pertinax and Julia Didiana,* son and daughter of emperors, having joined ourselves in marriage in the presence of the immortal Gods, honoured in the Capitol and mighty everywhere, have inscribed our names upon this parchment that they may serve to begin the Genealogy of a new patrician family. Our Line is known throughout the Universe, there is no need to recall it; but as our posterity must be hid, we want our children, as an incentive to virtue, to know that they spring from the rulers of a people that ruled the world. Therefore we here inscribe our names, and ordain, by our sacred paternal authority, that each one of our descendants shall write his own in order, as long as the Roman name shall be known in the World. And thus beginning we write with our own hand:

1. Helvius Pertinax begot on Didia Juliana,
2. H.-Cæsario Pertinax, who went into Gaul and begot on Julia Severa, daughter of his mother and Caracalla,

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*(Only a fragment of the Latin is given in the note.) Ab H. Pertin. et Did. Juliana, Aug., Imperatoribus obortis, conjugio junctis, Magnis Diis Immortalibus in Capitolio cultis, et ubique potentibus, adstentibus, nomina, prænomina, cognominaque, nostra in hac vitulina pelle inscribenda decretum est, inchoandamque novam patritiam familiam statutum. Totem per Orbem claruerunt Majores; itaque non sunt recensendi; ast Posteri latebunt inglorii. Idcirco, ut ad generositatem semper eorum animus excitetur, et a Dominis Dominorum Gentium se sciant exoriundos, sub Nominibus nostris hic inscriptis, paterna auctoritate, Nepotum nostrorum tandiu Nomina subscribi, quandiu Nomine Romano terretur Orbis, sancte sancivimus. Sic manu nostra ex ordine exaramus; HELVIUS PERTINAX: EX DIDIA JULIANA: CÆSARIONEM H. PERTINACEM FILIUM I° GENITUM HABUIT, etc.

3. H.-Octavius Pertinax, who bought land.
4. Who begot H.-Claudius Pertinax, who was a husbandman.
5. Who begot H.-Titus Pertinax, who was stripped of all he had.
6. Who begot H.-Maximus Pertinax, who was a swineherd.
7. Who begot H.-Augustulus Pertinax, who was a shepherd.
8. Who begot H.-Julianus Pertinax, who did as his father.
9. Who begot H.-Constans Pertinax, who did as his father
10. Who begot H.-Carus Pertinax, who was a muleteer.
11. Who begot H.-Tacitus Pertinax, who did as his father.
12. Who begot H.-Decius Pertinax, who was a horse dealer.
13. Who begot H.-Honorius Pertinax, who was a squire and whose wife was coveted by king Chilpéric.

Who (Honorius and King Chilpéric) begot

14. *Olibrius Pertinax, who was squire to Clovis I, King of the Franks.
15. Who begot Merovæus Pertinax, who was *Custos Ventionum* or master of the hunt.
16. Who begot Charibertus Pertinax, who was made Count of Auxerre.
17. Who begot Chilpericus P., who had himself and his wife and children tonsured, shaved, whipped and cloistered by Saint Benigne of Dijon, and declared himself and all his posterity serfs to the Abbey, for the salvation of his soul and the souls of his family.
18. Who begot Chlodovæus P., who managed to escape the tonsure, and fled with the genealogical roll for sole inheritance; who married in the town of Bituriges, now Bourges, in a singular manner. He was passing through the market square, very poorly clad, just as there was a hue and cry after a murderer, who had escaped the gibbet with the aid of his numerous and powerful family. Poor Chlodovæus was taken for the culprit, and the family of the latter, to save their relative, swore to the judge that the man before him was the real murderer, instead of *Yvo Teutobochus* their kinsman. The judge was not altogether convinced, but as, by condemning an unprotected stranger, he could save a man of the country, he resolved to hang Chlodovæus as an example. The descendant of three emperors and a king was about to be hanged, when a prostitute, touched by the proper man beneath the rags, and even more by his youth, desired to exercise, on the victim's behalf, the privilege, which prostitutes of Bourges then enjoyed, of saving a man from the scaffold, by offering to marry him forthwith and promising to change her way of life from bad to good: to which the Berruchons agreed, thinking that the marriage would be as entertaining as the execution, and they would lose nothing. From which conjunction issued,
19. Chlotarius P., who was a vagabond all his life.

*Henceforward the name Helvius does not occur.

20. Who begot Dagobertus Pertinax, who was scullion to a count of Poitiers.
21. Who begot Eginhardus Pertinax I, who was chief cook to king Pepin-le-Bref.
22. Who begot Hincmarus P., the favourite of Emma, daughter of Charlemagne, on whom
23. He begot the bastard Carlomannus Pertinax, who took great liberties with the beautiful Judith, second wife of Louis-le-Débonaire.
24. Who begot Eginhardus Pertinax II, who wrote a Chronicle of our Kings.
25. Who begot Robertus Pertinax, who was a poet.
26. Who begot Theodoricus P., who was an idiot, and yet wrote the *Anecdotes du règne de Charles le Simple*, before he had reigned.
27. Who begot Recardus P., who was a fool, and composed a fine book of his deeds and sayings, called *Les Mille-et-une-Folies.*
28. Who begot Gontramnus Pertinax, who was a chimney-sweep.
29. Who begot Rodericus P., who did for men what Hercules did for the Augean horses.
30. Who begot Gondemarus Pertinax, who was a chiropodist.
31. Who begot Ordonius Pertinax, who was a doctor.
32. Who begot Ramirus Pertinacissimus, who was the Paris executioner.
33. Who begot Froïla Pertinacissimus, who did as his father.
34. Who begot Gregorius, who being too young, was supplanted by his sister's husband and became a butcher.
35. Who begot Garsias Pertinax, who was a cattle dealer.
36. Who begot Convallus, who was sutler in the army and court, in the reign of Henri I.
37. Who begot Ræmondus Pertinax, called *Restif*, who was a captain of Infantry.
38. Who begot Ingulphus Restif, who was colonel of Cavalry and afterwards became a Templar.
39. Who begot Edwinus Restif, the *Obstinate* I, who was general of the army and a brigand, according to custom.
40. Who begot Edgarus Restif the Obstinate II, who was count of Metz.
41. Who begot Aroldus Restif the Obstinate III, who was massacred at Tongres in a riot.
42. Who begot Calenus Restif the orphan, who was saved from the massacre by the countess his mother disguised as a beggar.
43. Who begot Diffus Restif on a strumpet, whom he married after the death of the countess his mother, who was a vagabond.
44. Diffus begot Uraca R. on the daughter of the chief of a band of Gypsies, who was a rogue.
45. Uraca R. begot Grimus Restif, who was as his father and his grandfather.
46. Who begot Edmundus-I-R, who was born in prison eight days after his father had been hung and three weeks before his mother's hanging.
47. Who begot Hugo R., who was a knifegrinder.
48. Who begot Guido Restif, who served in the shop of a cloth merchant.

49. Who begot Baldwinus R., on the daughter of the merchant, who fell in love with him because he was a handsome fellow; who feathered his nest by giving short measure.
50. Who begot Foulques R., who was a merchant in Guinea and was the first to bring the p. to Dieppe, his birthplace, from whence it went to Naples.
51. Who begot Marcel, who concealed the name R., and was provost of the Paris Merchants under King Jean and was massacred in the reign of Charles V.
52. Who begot Balthazar R., an orphan who remained under the guardianship of his maternal uncle, parliamentary councillor, and financier.
53. Who begot Jean Pierre Restif 1st, who was councillor of State.
54. Who begot Hiérosme R., who was devout and declaimed against the vices of the priests, and was banished.
55. Who begot Guillaume R., called the holy, on Josephette Courtenay, his maternal cousin; and was provost of Nitry and farmer to the holy monks of Molesme, lords of the said city.
56. Who begot Alexandre-Cesar, who was very proud and became president of the Parliament of Paris.
57. Who begot Abraham-Isaac R., who became a Huguenot and lost his father's office.
58. Who begot Daniel Habacuc R., who was massacred on St. Bartholomew's day in his hotel, fg.-S.-G.
59. Who begot Charles-David-Emmanuel R., born at Melun, who was attorney, then schoolmaster to the Huguenots at Auxerre without salary, and was dispossessed by bishop Amyot, the son of his father's butcher.
60. Who begot Bénigne-Machabée R., who became a commission agent in wines, made a lot of money, bought the estate of Villiers and built upon it.
61. Who begot Esdras Nehemie R., called the Just man, who enjoyed his possessions peaceably.
62. Who begot Uri Eléazer R., called the Uproar, who abandoned his property in Villiers, and fled to avoid being hung as a minister.
63. Who begot Élie-Elisée R., called the Doleful, on Hélisenne Courtenay-la-Loge, offspring of the Counts of Auxerre, afterwards emperors of Constantinople, who was converted at the age of nine by the persuasion of the Dragonnades.
64. Who begot on Gisèle Courtenay, his cousin, PIERRE II, RESTIF OR PERTINAX, who is myself, provost of Nitry, surnamed the *Harsh*.

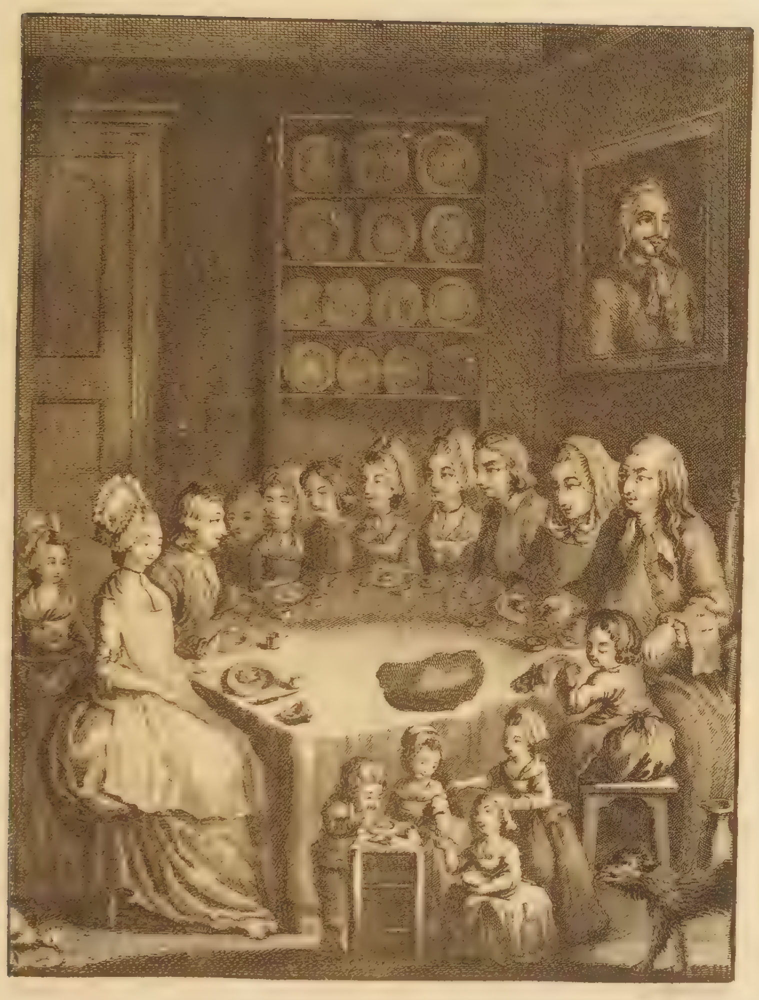
The following was added by my father and myself:

65. Pierre begot EDME II R. on Anne-Marguerite-Simon Cœurderoi, and was lieutenant of Sacy.
66. Edme R., surnamed the *Upright Man*, begot Nicolas-Edme Restif, called *Monsieur Nicolas*, on Barbe Ferlet-Bertro. He is the author of this work which contains his life without concealment. He is the LXVII in the line of His Most Serene Highness, the Emperor *Pertinax*.

"That is my genealogy," said Pierre when his name was reached. "It is true that a good many members of my family earned their living in somewhat lowly fashion, that some among them practised abominable professions and one or two were hung; but that is amply compensated by the distinction of its first origin, together with such illustrious descendants as two counts and a general; and those alliances with women who were related to reigning houses. I very much doubt, gentlemen, whether even one or two among you could count as many illustrious men and women in his noble house since H. Pertinax or even since Charlemagne. I doubt if even one of you, starting from the same time, would not find ancestors in his noble line who were blackguards or military brigands; who were hanged, massacred, burnt, or drowned in a sack, along with the cat and vipers. . . . How many poor wretches, languishing now in shame and poverty, have ancestors who held a sceptre? How many peasants, serfs in the past and now vassals of rich abbeys, are sons of the Frankish lords who founded these and gave themselves and their families as serfs to the monks they had created? You vaunt your blood, nobles of a day! In blood, all men are equal; education alone makes the difference between them. O noble lords, forget your ancestors and reckon your value by your personal merit!"

When Pierre had finished, the nobles looked at each other in stupefaction without speaking. Finally De la Curne, sieur de Ste-Palaye, said: "I was astonished that Pierre was not noble; I am no longer astonished." This episode is sufficient introduction to my ancestor. To return to myself.

The scope of the book I now propose is much greater than that of the *Vie de Mon Père.* There my purpose was to depict a virtuous peasant, an excellent farmer and the worthy head of a household; I could find no better



model than my father, and he it was that I painted. Here I propose to unveil the motives of the human heart in an actual person, whose passions throughout his life have had that energy which excludes nonentity. And after having carefully considered many people, I despaired of ever understanding them well enough to represent their thoughts and the motives for their actions. I repeat (for I must carry conviction) that I have found no one, except myself and only myself, whom I can absolutely and entirely unveil; only in myself could I scrutinise, develop and communicate the *feeling* evoked by each new experience; that is to say, the combined pleasure and pain caused by such an experience; and explain how advantage may be cancelled out by disadvantage. Therefore, convinced of what I can do and should do, I immolate myself for your instruction, Reader, I expose myself both in pen and person, happy if, by making a sacrifice of what is most dear to men: the favourite weakness, the privileged fault, the pampered vice for which one blushes the more, the more it is cherished; happy if I am rewarded for this summary justice done upon my imperfections by the illumination it sheds on conduct. Pleasure is always balanced by pain and pain by pleasure. "Tell me your pleasures and I will relate the story of your pain," said my father.

He added: "Let us adore the eternal justice of Nature. Were life an unmixed good, death would be an unrelieved calamity; and the lot of a tree or the most stupid animal would be happier than man's; for these live untroubled and die unaware.* Thus all the vain clamour of man is answered by adopting the right point of view. Nature is just towards her children; she only appears to trifle with them because life is meaningless if lived individually, or otherwise than as a part of all existence."

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*Happy that state of innocence, when man without knowledge or experience knows nothing of death, or like the animals is only aware in order to avoid it. You were very right, Jean-Jacques, to regret the forests! Yes, man by acquiring knowledge has ruined everything! . . . Why can not I, as I wished a thousand times in my youth, live with a mate in some solitary island; and why can I not be certain that the restless European, whose race seems the enemy of all others, would not come to trouble my descendants! I would banish all knowledge and forbid

Rent by my afflictions, ruined by the infamous wretches I shall mention hereafter, I begin at last to print this Book of bitterness and sorrow. *Ulciscetur, si perficitur, omnia damna nostra! Quando veniet? Nescio*:

Sua cuique vita obscura est! . . .

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them blood and flesh. Their wit would be less, but they would never make war; like the ox and the sheep they would die of old age, knowing neither slavery nor laws nor death. It is the eating of flesh that makes us intelligent . . . and thieves and assassins![†]

[†] I declare (and no one could doubt it) that I had begun *Monsieur Nicolas* long before I had seen the *Confessions* of J.-J. Rousseau, for it has been announced in my printed Catalogues since 1778. Nor shall I be suspected of having tried to imitate Madame de Warens in Madame Parangon (who is in every way different!) when it is remembered that my heroine is also the heroine of the *Paysan Perverti*, published before J.-J.'s project was heard of.

Certain facts, which do not appear in the *Epochs*, are to be found in seven volumes; entitled Mes Affaires, Mes Maladies, Ma Physique, Ma Morale et Ma Doctrine, Ma Politique, Mon Calendrier, Mes Contemporains, Mes Dates, and lastly in the *Drame de la Vie*, and these works are a complement to this story.

MONSIEUR NICOLAS

OR

THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

FIRST EPOCH

1734-1746

FIRST EPOCH

Childhood

1735 – 1746

> *Sunt et queis virtus contigit ante diem ;*
> *Ingenium cœleste suis velocius annis*
> *Surgit, et ignavæ fert male damna moræ.*
> Ovid, *de Arte.*

Lover of Truth, fear not to read me! You will not be beguiled by tinsel trappings, nor deceived on matters of fact. I have written novels enough which, though founded on reality, did not exclude imagination: I thirst for the simple truth; I give it to you; for truth alone can serve the purpose of this Book.

* * *

I FIRST saw the light on the 22nd of November,* 1734, in the village of Sacy: from the Latin *Saxiacus, a saxo,* our pastor Messire Antoine Foudriat used to say; and indeed the tilth of my native place is riddled with limestone, which flakes off readily in the working, since the fertile earth is only two or three inches in depth.†

My father was married twice: the first time to Marie Dondène, by whom he had seven children; the second, to Barbe Ferlet-de-Bertrô, who also bore him seven children, of whom I was the eldest. At my baptism, I was named by Edme-Nicolas, eldest son of the first marriage, acting on behalf of Nicolas Ferlet, my maternal grandfather; and by Anne, first born of all the children, who represented the late Anne-Marguerite Simon, my maternal grandmother. The old man was prevented from getting to Sacy by the bad weather. I was christened Nicolas-Anne-Edme, it being my father's wish that his own name should come last: but in writing out the certificate, Jacques Bérault, the schoolmaster, omitted the *Anne*, and this was never afterwards added, although it had been pronounced during the ceremony. My father decided that Nicolas was the name by which I should be called. It is a fine name, made up of the two Greek words, *Nikê* (victory) and *Laos* (people); so that it signifies *Conqueror* or *Ruler* of *Peoples.*

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*This was not correct date. See Introduction. [Ed. note.]

†Sacy, in the ancient bishopric of Auxerre, is 50 leagues from Paris, 3 from Tonnerre, 3 from Noyers, 4 from Vezelay, 4 from Chablis, 1 from Joux, 1 from Nitry, 1½ from Vermenton, 2 from Saint-Cyr, 5 from Saint-Bris and 7 from Auxerre. Courtenay, distant half a league, Laloge near by Courtenay; and Vaudupuits three-quarters of a league off are annexes of it. The latter hamlet belonged to the old state of Burgundy and Sacy to Champagne.

My mother combined in equal measure a lively wit, a kind heart, and beauty of person. Although a blonde, she was lively to the point of impatience, but she had schooled herself to a gentle complacence which never wavered. My father had also laboured with himself; irascible by nature, he was yet the mildest of men in his behaviour; he was an enthusiastic worker and loved every useful occupation. Thus I was compounded of three parts fire to one of the other elements, judging by my endowment in the extravagant passions – love, daring, fear, impatience, anger, indignation, zeal and compassion, all of which were incredibly strong in me. Assuredly I was conceived in an ardent embrace which gave the foundation to my character; if any vicious tendencies had been intermingled, I should have been a monster; the proof of my parents' purity of heart is in my natural candour. To add more fire to my blood and disposition, I had the most "temperamental" woman in the district for wet-nurse (for my mother could not nurse me herself; my father was opposed to it, for good reasons doubtless).

Good Lolive, wife of Lemoine, weaned her daughter, Nannette, who was already a sturdy child, when she took me to nurse; but this dear woman could not long refuse herself to her husband, who had already been denied for eighteen months, and it was thought necessary to wean me when I was but six months old. My constitution suffered thereby, but I have no grudge against my nurse. She has always loved me so tenderly that it would be ungrateful indeed to be wanting in the respect due to my foster mother.

In my first year I was taken to the *midnight mass* to satisfy the superstition of my sisters, who thought in this way to bring me immediately under the protection of the Infant Jesus. They meant well, since they loved me for my beauty.*

When I was nine months old I was taken, on the Sunday after the patronal festival in mid-August, to see my father's friend, Monsieur Collet, notary at Vermenton, and I have been told that two little girls, one five years old and the other three and a half, warmly disputed for the title of "my wife." I have heard since who they were, and it is indeed a strange coincidence!† I have been married to neither, but I have adored them both.

My first childish memory is of an incident towards the end of my second year. Irritated because I had been left naked and unlaced, I vented my rage on the looking-glass, in which my sister Margot was showing me my own distorted face; I hit it with the handle of a table-knife and broke it. The cracks made me uglier still, and the facets so multiplied the reflections, that I thought I saw a new world behind the mirror. This phenomenon checked my tears and I felt my first astonishment, my first wonder: I had my first thought. . . . I was not punished; my mother did no more than bewail her last remaining looking-glass.

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*Here, I think, I may repeat frankly what I have so often been told, that I was the most beautiful child ever seen. This is quite usual in children with fine features of the Italian caste; they are beautiful up to adolescence. It may be added that the result of my sisters' piety, which was strongly condemned by Messire Antoine Foudriat, was to give me colics, from which I suffered cruelly up to the age of eleven or twelve!

†Colette Collet was five years old; Jeannette Rousseau, daughter of the notary of Courgis, where my brother was afterwards curé, was three and a half.

The second incident happened about six months later. Anne, my sister and godmother, had just married a man of Vermenton. When we took her home, the day she went to live in her husband's house, I was carried as far as Moulinot.* The next day I took advantage of the first moment in which I was left alone, and followed the same road; plodding on and on. Good Claudine Sirop, a villager, met me below the Côte-des-Près, quite near Moulinot: and seeing me, a child barely able to walk, alone upon the road, supposed that one of my sisters was in our vineyard. She called to them, but as no one answered, she came up to me, saying: "And where are you going, Monsieur Nicolas?" "I am going to Vermenton, to see my sister Anne, at the house of her husband who is kissing her." "All alone, my pretty one?" "Yes." "Come back with me, my chick; the carts will run over you." She took my hand to lead me home, but I resisted, crying:

*This little mill no longer exists, but the ruins were still to be seen in my boyhood; the which demonstrates a very important physical truth: that springs and rivers gradually diminish. For the Moulinot to function it was necessary for the springs of Joux to flow as far as Sacy, together with that of La Chapelle, the big spring of La Farge, the two Fontaines Saint-Jean, of which the southern has been dry a hundred years, the spring of the house of la Bretonne, and the Toûs du Crot-Domo; and that these waters should pass through the dyke, in the middle of which were the remains of the basin where they used to meet and where, in early childhood, I have seen fish. What caused these springs to dry up so quickly? The clearing of the hills, which has not only robbed these of their moisture, but has facilitated their degradation by rain, to such a point that I have seen the earth of *Près-des-roies* or *des rigoles* raised by four feet and, from being swamp, become excellent land. The earth ages and dries up even as we do.

"Take me to Vermenton!" However, I had to yield to a strength greater than my own. She picked me up; I called her bad names and made up my mind to tell my parents that she had beaten me. When we got home she related what had happened, and was warmly thanked. But I called her *the naughty woman,* and launched my accusation. (Already such perversity! A carefully planned revenge! Happily another passion has since stifled that one.) "What, my little one, I beat you?" I was well punished! Everyone called me a liar. I looked askance, not daring to face the woman I had accused, and wept, and played the spoilt child that says he has been beaten when he is crossed. This adventure, through the wisdom of my parents, sickened me of slander.

Praise of my pretty looks impressed me, I remember, but I only valued it in proportion to the charm of the person who bestowed it, and most of all if this was a young girl. From earliest childhood, instinct moved me towards the opposite sex; yet, on the other hand, married women and the bustle of a household filled me with the deepest disgust. Girls with the vivid colouring of the rose were always my favourites. Thomas Piôt, my father's partner in collecting the village tithes for the ancient Bishopric and Chapter of Auxerre, had four grown daughters: Marie, the second, had a beautiful colour; Madeleine, the third, was white-skinned and dimpled; Nannette, the youngest, had the charm of regular features.* Marie was my favourite: Marie in a beautiful Indian neckerchief with red flowers on it which

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*See my *Calendar,* which is an important part of the Story of my Life. In it I commemorate 366 *women,* the principal ones with whom I have come into contact. This kind of *Chart* of my *Life* is intended to assemble them all from a single point of view. Some of these are not mentioned in my *Life*; of such the Calendar gives necessary details and thus becomes an integral part of this Work. Where several women have had the same characteristic they are recorded on the same day.

enhanced the brilliance of her complexion. When I was older, I found Madeleine more attractive than her sister. Finally, in the full strength of my manhood, I ran after spare, thin women, such as Agathe, the eldest of the four sisters. . . . But to return to the rosy Marie Piôt.

Every Sunday, as soon as I had finished dinner, I used to make my escape to visit my fair; not so much for the dainties which were lavished upon me, as to be fondled – and very ardently! – by Marie, and carried in her arms to Vespers. I am forced to describe her caresses; since they have been prejudicial, not to my morals only, but to my health; for the memory of them over-stimulated my fiery imagination before I had come to my full strength. Marie used to kiss me on the cheek, and upon my lips which have always been inviting. She went further, though in all innocence on her part; she put her hand under my little petticoats and amused herself by gently slapping and tickling me. She went further yet . . . and then she would devour me with kisses. . . .* I repeat, Marie was as innocent as myself; she merely yielded to a blind impulse: she saw that I was a favourite with her sisters and all the other girls, and was so flattered by my preference, that fondness grew to passion. My delicate effeminate face was very much admired in a district where the marsh air breathed in former times has coarsened the race. I was a prodigy! When Marie carried me to church, the prettiest girls used to surround her in order to kiss me. I can still remember the sense of something said to Marie by a young man, when she was carrying

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*To be more explicit, I will make use of a learned tongue, so that men will have to translate it with decent reticence to women: *Mentulam testiculosque titillabat, quoadusque erigerem; tunc subridebat velatis oculis humore vitreo, et aliquoties deficiebat*. . . . And I returned her caresses, with the laughter of extravagant pleasure. Thus it was that a sequence of small contributory causes developed and fortified a temperament of astonishing eroticism which was to plunge me into a multitude of errors. Important lesson for all parents of attractive children!

me one day. He put his mouth close to her ear, and said: "Maïe! . . . confess you love this pretty child; and we all know you would make a good mother and a good wife. I wager you want a boy like that. I do too – and to give you one!" . . . Marie blushed and lowered her eyes; a moment later she raised them again, and they followed Jean Nollin as long as he was in sight. He married her a short time after, and I was at the wedding.

An incident in this same year, 1738, proves how dangerous it is for a husband and wife to behave freely in the presence of children, even when these innocents are not of an age to understand. One day I found myself at the house of a man named Cornevin, who had just married Nannette Belin, a pretty girl. They lived in a cottage let to them by my father. The man was preparing vine-sticks, and for each one that he put a point to, he would embrace his wife, and take other liberties which filled me with ingenuous wonder. The woman found the expression on my little face so comic that every time her husband embraced her she burst out laughing, just to look at me. I laughed because they laughed, and her merriment redoubled. Her husband said strange things to her which displeased me: possibly by their impudence, but more probably, perhaps, from that sentiment of jealousy which is natural to all males, and manifests itself in the human race even before the powers have developed. The hatred which Cornevin inspired in me still endures. I went away in dudgeon, after a very positive caress. The girl's laughter charmed me, but I found the man so ugly that I could not understand how Nannette endured his caresses, and even returned them. This wanton scene has never been effaced from my memory, and, even in early childhood, it had a terrible effect on my undeveloped senses; above all after I had been given a repetition of it in a barn by Thomas Carré* and his betrothed, the daughter of a woman ironically called *la Polie.*

The fifth incident in my early childhood is of a quite different nature: it concerns a little trick I played to win the reward promised if I did not wet my bed. I slept between two cupboards in my father's room, under a great octagonal picture of the Virgin and Child. I was wakened in the middle of an evacuation by the noise which the threshers made fetching a light. In my despair at this tiresome and humiliating accident, it occurred to me to dry the place by my natural heat, as day must still be far off. I succeeded. When I got up next morning I was praised and praised. I responded modestly, not daring to mention the reward due to my virtue. However one of my sisters did this for me, and I was given some gooseberry jelly of which I was passionately fond. I took the piece of bread; but remembering that the Virgin wept whenever I told a lie, I looked up at the picture and thought I saw her crying. I took the bitten slice out of my mouth, and offered it to my sister Margot. She refused it. Everyone was astonished. They thought I was ill, and questioned me. I blushed with lowered eyes and, pointing to the Virgin, sobbed: "She is crying."† My mother understood; she kissed me, and wanted me to finish my bread and jam as a reward for having told the truth. But my innocence had an unfortunate result. My sisters laughed and whispered together, and, as I had very quick ears, I heard them say to my sister Margot, who was almost as simple as myself: "Can a bit of painted canvas cry?" I realised that the painted canvas was the Virgin, and ever after examined it carefully when my sisters told me it cried or laughed; and seeing no change, lost my faith before I could reason. Yet facts supported my faith, since, before I had overheard my sisters, I had always seen the Virgin weep when I told a lie: but equally they favoured my incredulity, for never after did the Virgin weep however much I lied. Some other way of giving me a horror of untruth would have been less efficacious at first, but more lasting.

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*Thomas Carré was trussing straw and his sweetheart was jesting with him. I found their happiness together very agreeable, and was playing by myself apart, when Thomas suddenly threw La Polie's daughter on to the fresh straw. It seemed to me a treacherous attack, but, as the girl was still laughing, I did not worry much. Soon things became serious; the girl was struggling, Thomas was holding her down. At last I heard sighs. . . . Then pity wakened in my heart; and, armed with a little vine branch, I fell upon the traitor and beat him, crying: "Let her go, you brute!" "Ah! the little imp" (gasped the girl), "he is still here!" . . . I only hastened her defeat. When the crisis was passed, she fondled me and forbade me to tell anyone that Thomas had beaten her. . . . I saw the whole act, understanding nothing of it at the time; and yet it held the germ of my adventure with Nannette Rameau, and of that with Marguerite Miné.

†Thus men, in the infancy of a slow and painful civilisation, first believed and then saw the prodigies their priests affirmed: to-day there are

My excessive fear of dogs (a fear so intense that the sight of one always makes me shudder) is the result of the sixth event in my childhood. I was playing in front of our barn with a mastiff called Jupiter (whose name my step-sisters always associated with that of the ploughboy Germain, never mentioning either without affection) and I must have pinched him as we rolled together on the straw, for he bit me in the calf, which was left bare by my socks. At the same moment, a mad dog pursued by the villagers dashed into the courtyard and took refuge behind a large hencoop. Warned by the shouts, my father came out with his gun, fired at the beast

no more miracles because men are no longer children. The astonishing thing is that the religious vow is still in force; for what weight can it have with a philosopher, and in an age when everyone is a philosopher? What has destroyed religion, people ask. Knowledge and the priests. Knowledge has destroyed dogma, priests morality. How shamelessly have the priests denied their master, even to the least detail! Thirst for forbidden riches, for honours instead of the ordained humility; for vengeance, and legal persecution. . . . How imprudent! They whispered among themselves: "Christianity is false; it must be turned to the service of our passions." But the people have heard them, as I overheard my sisters.

and killed it. I screamed in terror. They ran up and found me covered with blood! . . . My father turned pale; he examined me, and the wound in my leg did nothing to relieve his anxiety. Judge of his fear when the surgeon arrived and said I had been bitten by a dog! They gave me up for lost. However they questioned me: "He bit me, the traitor," I said, pointing to Jupiter, whom I always treated as an equal; and I explained. My parents were somewhat reassured. They gave the dog food and drink, and shut him up to see what happened. He grew fat. I sensed their anxiety: Jupiter was shut up, and I heard them say that it was to see if he went mad; I had seen the big black dog roll over covered with blood, the horror and terror on every face. This picture, added to the surgeon's remarks, of which I understood more than was imagined, made a profound impression on my brain.*

Both my fear of dogs and my nocturnal terrors were the result of shock to the imagination. During the night especially, when there were no external objects to engage it, my excited imagination worked furiously, painting horrible moving pictures, which tired me out in the time meant for repose. Religious truths taught too early, were another cause of this disorder. As soon as the lights were extinguished I saw horrid horned faces, grimacing frightfully. I used to scream in terror, and wake my mother. "What's the matter, Nicolas?" "I'm frightened." "It is very strange," said my father, "what can be wrong with the child? He will not live." "I was just the same in my childhood when left in the dark," answered my mother.* I heard, and the voices of themselves reassured me. Then I would see processions and priests in their copes; and the devils fled away. I loved these pious visions. I imagine that my elder sisters, especially Margot, who was very young and very stupid, must have told stories of devils, either to me or in my presence; but I cannot recall a single one, although I remember the dreams which were reflections of them: a proof that we sense an impression before we can understand it.

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*We shall see in 1745 that, at the age of ten and a half, I was not afraid of a wolf. At fifteen I pursued one through a fog in which it was impossible to see ten paces. Yet in the same year and on the same road, a little dog in the middle of the path prevented me from passing: I turned across sown land and was scolded by the field watchers. I pointed innocently to the terrible animal, and they ran upon the monster, which was little larger than a hare, and it fled yelping.

I remember that at this time my faith in women and girls was absolute; to me they were the only beings who were good and pitiful, and incapable of deceiving me, or of teasing me; for irony was a rhetorical figure which infallibly put me in a rage.† In a word I regarded women as excellent creatures, incapable of doing me harm, and ready to help me in every way that was within their scope. My idea of men, with the one exception of my father, was diametrically opposed to this: they seemed to me harsh and strict, sneering and malicious. They terrified me; I feared them, and fled from them with almost the same horror that I felt for dogs. What was the reason? My manner was serious in their company; they thought me sensible and did not play jokes on me. Later the isolation of la Bretonne made me as shy as a little cat raised in a lonely place. Pride and a feeling of inadequacy removed me still further from them; and finally my two elder brothers, then at a seminary, dismayed me with their Jansenist austerity.

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*I remember saying to myself: "They think I do not understand." The natural liveliness of my imagination was the prime cause of my terrors, but this was stimulated by the horror of the gunshot and the death and blood of the mad dog. My physical sensibility has always been such that not only am I unable to see my own blood or that of another without fainting, but the simple recital of certain illnesses produces the same effect upon me. Quite a light blow has often made me unconscious for three-quarters of an hour. To the sensibility of a woman, I added the vigour of a perfectly developed man. It is with this physical sensibility and other endowments that later I shall plunge into a career of love. All my passions were in like manner irritable in the extreme; I was extremely timid and extremely choleric, extremely modest and extremely vain, extremely brave and extremely cowardly, over-bearing and submissive, tender and cruel, etc. I may add that this temperament in its flood is valuable neither for the sciences nor the arts; but if, as in J.-J. Rousseau, it is not too soon exhausted, at forty or forty-five it may produce the work of a young man.

†Sarcasm and quizzing, whoever uses them, are the sign of a bad disposition; I will go further and say of an infamous one. The word is not too strong. Consider that man who takes pleasure in torturing his fellow-creatures, tearing "sarcasms" off him (for the word in Greek meant a strip of flesh), and tell me if he is not made to be a torturer or executioner? Archilochus and even Aristophanes must have been unmannerly fellows. There is a printer in Paris called *Ppstts*, who is avoided by some, fawned upon by others, loathed by all: and this because of his malicious inclination for quizzing.

When I was between four and five, I remember seeing Nicolas Ferlet, my maternal grandfather, who came to stay with my parents. At that time I was tormented by colics and, during a violent attack, I heard the old man say to his daughter: "We shall not have the good fortune to keep him." This made me feel important and inspirited me; a moment later the pain had passed and I was playing energetically. "He does not bear pain easily," said my grandfather. "So much the better! I have never had much love for patience or martyrs; one never knows whether they are oysters or men."* Violent and almost constant pains such as those from which I suffered, soured my character and made me destructive at times; my mother's care met with little response and I repulsed her caresses,† only submitting to them impatiently and when I was forced to. This Barbe Ferlet set against my grandfather's forecast of my character; she was distressed by these humours and wept for them. . . . "You can see for yourself that the child has grave faults?" "Yes, yes! He is petulant, headstrong and destructive. I know that he takes everything he can get hold of from the house to give to his friends, and that you are obliged to correct him with a certain severity, because of the step-children; and I know that they blame you for this, and often intercede for the little culprit, who then repays them with ingratitude. I know too that they have such a weakness for the child, because of his delicate features, that they love and pet him just as much in spite of this, and are vexed with you; so that they not only forgive his little sins against them, but cover them up, which encourages him to go further. But, my dear daughter, I cannot believe that your son is bad at heart. Let me observe him during these two holidays which I am spending with you, and, before I leave, I will tell you exactly what he is like, so that his father and you may find a remedy for his defects."

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*A great and beautiful truth which I have always remembered; for, without appearing to do so, I listened to this conversation most attentively, and it has preserved me from an enthusiasm for false virtue. A man is tortured and does not cry out. What does that prove? That he suffers less than another, or is a better man? Not at all: but only that his fibre (our novelists would say soul) is stronger. Does this tougher fibre, which is so admired, make him a better son, a better husband, a better father or a better friend? No; it makes him hard, and difficult to approach or to live with. Let us emerge from the childish virtue of a Plutarch or a Seneca! The real man cries out or retaliates when he is hit. The much admired Scevola must have been a scoundrel. Who will assert that Regulus did not cry out? The Stoic denatures man while claiming to perfect him. Like trainers of mountebanks, he teaches nothing but tricks and feats, calculated to throw simple folk into an ecstasy of amazement, but with no application in morality.

†I have never been able to endure any caresses save those of love; those prompted by natural

The venerable Nicolas Ferlet kept me with him throughout the two days. On his arrival, he had won my heart with sugar and chestnuts. He tested me in various ways to get to the bottom of my character. I was not difficult

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ties or friendship are intolerable to me. I preferred other means of showing filial duty and friendship. Wholly devoted to love, even before power had come to me, even after it has left me (for it has nearly left me now, in 1793) this passion and this alone could have civilised me, as it certainly civilised the human race, which has only so recently taken up the sceptre on this earth; and it alone could ease the smarting griefs which beset the evening of my life. Yet we shall soon see that I ran away from the grown-up girls who would have kissed me, the reason being that I grew wild and fled what gave me pleasure, and because there was a measure of constraint in these caresses. The proof of this is that, during this time, I used secretly to kiss little Marie Fouard and Madeleine Piôt, her cousin—and more than that. It was through my dislike of caresses that I held to my masculinity; such childish fondling seemed to me fit only for the effeminate.

to understand. On the evening of the second day, after the children had gone to bed, my grandfather spoke as follows to his son-in-law and his daughter:

"My children, I am very happy: I know our little Nicolas as I knew his mother. He is as you were, dear Barbare, in your childhood; and yet you were a good girl, and are a good wife. Your son is intelligent, yet simple; he is proud, not through hardness but through a natural dignity; he is impatient of humiliation and all unjust commands, as you were at his age, my daughter. He thinks himself as good as any king's son, and will submit to no one, not even to you, his mother. I have tested him in every way, and to-morrow morning, before leaving you, I will put him to the proof in your presence. That is all I have to say this evening: to-morrow at our farewell breakfast, I will show you the rest." Such were my grandfather's words, as I overheard them at the time and as my mother repeated them to me in 1767, when I stayed with her for four months.

At the farewell breakfast, my grandfather sent for me. I was taken out of bed so as to see him once more, and ran to him half-naked. "Nicolas, my son," he said, "you have many faults, and these grieve your mother. She is my daughter and has always obeyed me: obey me too, and correct these, or I will whip you like a dog which is being trained." Astonished by these words from one who had been so kind to me, I gave him a black look and, in my rage, broke my little pasteboard horse and my pretty coach from Paris, and threw my ninepins and little ball into the fire. Then I sat down with my back to him. "Nicolas," continued my grandfather, "I said that to test you. Did you really think that a grandpapa, who had been so kind to you yesterday and the day before, could treat you like a dog to-day? I thought you were intelligent" (while he was speaking I turned round a little). "For your father is intelligent and so is your mother – yet you are not! Who can you take after?" I turned right round. "I am not a beast like a dog." "No, but you are not as clever as I thought, or you would have understood that I was only teasing. It was just a joke; I love your mother too much not to be foolishly fond of you also. Come to me." I threw myself into his arms. "That is not all," he continued. "I want to see you friends with your mother; you have grieved, deeply grieved her; for the more one loves a child, the more one suffers if he is cold and unresponsive." "But I am not, grandpapa, not in the least." "So I told your mother yesterday evening; I assured her that you would be a good son and that you loved her very much, and your father too. She believed me, and has promised to give you a kiss." My mother held out her arms; but far from going to her, I turned away a little. "Just like you again," said my grandfather to his daughter. "As a child, you could not bear to be caressed; you repulsed even your mother and myself . . . Nicolas, your father loves you; do you love him?" "Yes, grandpapa!" "Supposing he were in danger and to save him it was necessary to put your hand in the fire, would you do it? Would you put it . . . there, if it was necessary?" "Yes, grandpapa." "And for me?" "For you? . . . yes, yes," "And for your mother?" "For mamma? Both of them, both of them!" "We shall see if you are telling the truth, for your mother is in great need of your little help! If you love her, you must prove it." I made no answer; but, putting together all that had been said, I went to the fireplace and, while they were making signs to each other, put my right hand into the fire. The pain drew a deep sigh from me. Barbe noticed me first, and crying out: "Ah, my child," she darted forward and pulled me away. She fainted when she saw my injured hand; and my father and grandfather, taken quite by surprise, could at first think only of her. "Wait a moment," I said, "and I will burn the other hand to make her come to; this one hurts too much." My grandfather left his daughter to catch hold of me. When my mother recovered consciousness, her first action was to kiss my smarting hand; then, in a flash, she had fetched fresh butter with which to cover the burn. But in spite of all her care, the nail of the right ring finger came off and grew again with a cleft down the middle. My mother wanted me to stay quiet on her lap: "Let me go, mother, you will be safe soon because my hand is hurting a lot. Let me run about so as not to feel it – unless it is necessary that I should feel it?" "My poor child, my dear child, how unjust I have been to him!" she exclaimed. "Do not judge children too soon," said my grandfather. "Wait. Some men are not mature until they are thirty or thirty-five; to pass judgment on them sooner is to eat an excellent fruit while it is still green, and then condemn the tree. Farewell, son-in-law. . . . Farewell, my daughter. . . . Take care of your child's hand: it will be of service to you some day – how, I do not know. The tests have succeeded beyond my hopes, and I affirm that he has a generous nature. Remember these words when I am no more, and then you will say: 'That is just as Père Ferlet said it would be!'" Then he kissed me, and I felt the tears of this venerable old man upon my cheek. I was moved, but not surprised; for I had that pride of which my grandfather had just spoken, and it gave me the highest idea of the dignity of my estate. (Alas! for a long time I have not felt that!) . . . Nicolas Ferlet, the last of the male Bertrô, departed, and I never saw him again.*

*I think that I only went to the village of Accolay to see my grandfather once. But my memory is not clear as to whether it was before or after the incident just related. I have never seen such a charming cottage. It had only the one room below, and a little loft; but it had a garden, and at the bottom, a stream in which the wine was put to cool while we ate on the banks. I was enchanted by the stream, which was wired off at either end of the garden and used as a fish-pond.

In the plan which I have set myself, no detail must be omitted which made any impression upon me, and such is the incident I am about to relate. It increased my hatred of men, and was my first proof that grown-up people could make mistakes and be unjust: a terrible discovery, and one which children should not make until reason has developed. It filled me with distrust, in place of that blind confidence which I had had till then in the wisdom of those older than myself. Happy illusion! and the first lost to me. . . . It must have been in October or November, towards the end of my fifth year. With my sister Margot I was going to the school of red curly-haired Maître Jacques Bérault, who split osiers or prepared vine sticks whilst the youngest children read what he knew by heart of the *Syllabaire Latin.* He used to correct them, without looking at their books, when they spelt out the words badly. I was at the *Pater*, which I enunciated in the old manner, preceding most of the consonants with vowels which distorted them. I spelt out *noster*, and said *enneoessetèerre*; and wept, thinking that I was being made fun of, when they tried to make me say *noster.* This began to put Maître Jacques against me. My thumb had rubbed away two of the down-strokes in the word *tu-um*, so that only one stroke remained of the second *u* and two of the *m*, and a little black from the smudged down-stroke of the *u* made a dot above the other one. Thus the two words *tu in* were clearly written; and thus I pronounced it twenty times in succession. The teacher corrected me; my sister and all my schoolfellows whispered

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This, the last holding of the last Bertrô, passed to my aunt Mairat, whose children, then poorer than myself, are now much richer. I saw it again in 1764, when I went to sell another little garden belonging to my mother, in order to meet interest due to the Factory of Vermenton. It was on this visit that I saw my pretty cousin La Ramée, of whom I shall be speaking, and who has been placed in my Calendar. . . . If I have in anything verified my grandfather's forecast, it is in writing the *Vie de Mon Père*, a work which even my enemies have been compelled to admire.

(Without copy, this 31st of October 1790.)

"tu-um"; but I actually saw *tu in* and should have thought it a lie to say it otherwise. Here was the teacher's mistake: he grew impatient and whipped me without having looked at my book; afterwards, he looked; and his surprise was clear to me! He went outside for a moment, and all his pupils saw the fatal word, and agreed that Maître Jacques was in the wrong. My sister Margot wept, and I, who had just been whipped for the first time in my life, was discovering that it was a punishment that could smart a good deal in winter! . . . I sobbed. It was Edmond Rameau and his sister Madelon (already my enemies*) who thought of demonstrating from another primer that the word should have been *tu-um*. All those who knew the *Pater* by heart laughed at them. "If little Monsieur Nicolas had used his memory instead of reading he would have recited *sanctificetur nomen tuum*!" On returning, the schoolmaster did nothing that he should have done to enlighten me, and I believed him to be more ignorant than his pupils. At home my sister Margot made matters worse by loud complaints against

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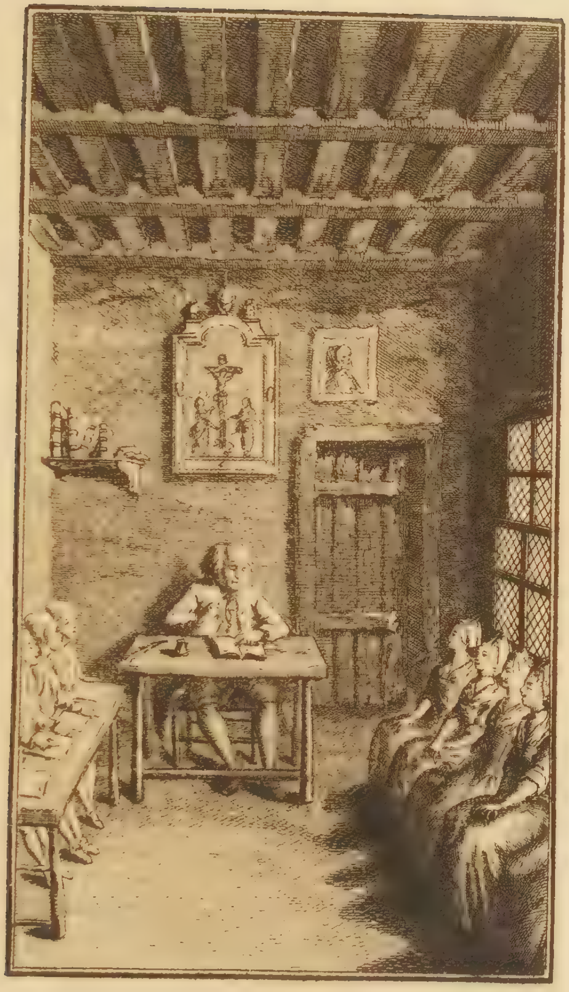
*Even at this early age Madame Rameau was jealous of me; she was the daughter of Lieutenant Boujat, my father's predecessor, and cousin-german of my mother's first husband and his children. M. Rameau was extremely wealthy, and yet my father had been chosen to fill his father-in-law's place. *Inde irae.* I often used to go to the Curé's house, attracted by the parings from the wafer which he used to let me eat when he was preparing the host; and, as he was our neighbour, he always called me on these occasions, for he liked to see me rolling at his feet like a kitten, to catch every crumb. At this time I had no shyness, a mental sickness which overtook me as my mind developed, and frightened my parents all the more because it had degenerated into mania in our cousin Droin the rich. Mme Rameau was often a witness of Messire Antoine Foudriat's affection for me; she would have liked only her children to have had the scraps from the host. But I had to commit some serious fault that could be pointed to for this to happen. Chance served her. She had three daughters: Ursule, the eldest and charming, but so proud that I was afraid of her; Cadette, very plain, whom I loathed; and lastly Madelon, whom I did not like much. She made her sons bring me to the house, certain that sooner or later I should be guilty of some obvious impropriety. We were playing, and Madelon joined us. In connection with some dispute with her brothers, François and Edmond, she threw me on the ground, and amused herself by holding me there. I kicked and fought; then Ursule and Cadette made for me. . . . I protest that it was



Maître Jacques, and even my father, who was always so prudent, showed his dissatisfaction in my presence. Then I played the spoilt child and, half crying, came forward with my grievance. They had no idea that I had overheard what had passed and I was told that I had been in the wrong. "How can that be?" I thought. And this reflection, which led to nothing at the time, had disastrous results some years later, by opening my eyes too soon to the dangerous policy of always putting children in the wrong, so necessary to small-minded people. I regarded reproof, even from my parents, as a matter of form, and their censure as purposely exaggerated; usually I did not take it seriously and behaved accordingly.

Pardon these trifling details; they are necessary at the beginning of my story, but I will make up for them by the events in later *Epochs*.

Following on this incident, I was sent for the first time to stay with my sister Anne at Vermenton. Her husband, Miché-Linard, was an odd eccentric sort of person. The damage he did to my character by speaking

without any ill intention on my part, but, in my struggles, my hand got underneath Ursule's skirt and I encountered there the softest, silkiest something that I had ever felt. The impression left was as delicious as it was deep and dangerous. . . . Ursule uttered a cry and, running to her mother, whispered to her. The game was stopped at once: Madame Rameau dismissed me coldly and, instead of speaking to my parents, she complained to M. le Curé. The pastor came to my father's house and administered correction with his own hand without telling my mother the reason; she never knew until I told her myself in 1746 when I had smallpox. I was banished from Messire Antoine's house, and the Rameaus had sole enjoyment of the wafer parings; I was excluded from the sanctuary and have never served at mass in Sacy. Such was the beginning of my shyness, which was founded on excessive pride. From the moment that I felt myself no longer loved by everybody, no longer admired in everything, I was filled with shame and through this shame I grew excessively shy. . . . By a refinement of malice, Mme Rameau, seeing that I ran away from her, pretended to court me. One day, when she was sitting in front of the presbytery door with M. le Curé, I turned aside by the cemetery to avoid her. She saw me and called me her *chick*. I fled, instead of going to her; and I heard the kind lady point out my rudeness to the pastor. When I was bigger, she always made me welcome, and I have no doubt that I could have had her Madelon if I had paid my court to the mother. But then I had other views.

carelessly of my father and mother, was certainly irreparable. I heard weaknesses attributed to them, I, to whom they were gods without fault. Miché, a chatterbox, delighted to retail, in my presence and in spite of his wife's signs, slanders which I must not repeat. . . . I was happy enough with my sister, on this first visit, as I had not yet turned into a little savage. I went to school under M. Convers, who was much better informed than Maître Jacques. I was tenderly loved by my sister and caressed by everyone for my prettiness (especially in the household of my father's old friend, M. Collet, notary and magistrate, who had several charming daughters),* and these were the happiest days of my childhood. But it was not to be the same on my second visit. My character had changed; I had had time to become aware of myself and of my liberty on my native soil; I had become so attached to the latter that I endured the cruel pains of exile, which are so grievous that they hold free men and animals in bondage to the place of their birth. Myself less lovable, I was less loved, and became more and more uncouth. It may be that my father took me from Maître Jacques because he feared the consequences of the master's conduct towards me; but without realising it, he delivered me to a greater danger.

It was on my return from Vermenton and shortly after an involuntary indiscretion towards Ursule Rameau, that pretty girl whose death caused so much anguish to her mother, that I had my first attack of that proud, uncouth shyness which has been the torment of my life. My mother sent me to fetch a neighbour, called *La Grand' Jeanne*, who lived by the Croix-du-Cimetière. Twenty paces beyond our yard, I saw a lot of people in the Place du Terrehaut; and glancing down, I noticed that I was not well dressed. I went back to demand my striped frock. It was put on, and I went out into the street. Opposite la Polie's door, I saw a large caterpillar covered with long hairs. I dared not pass it. There was a hen close by. I remember thinking: "If only she would eat it!" and then reasoning: "I am larger than that hen; she is not afraid of the caterpillar, and I am afraid of it." I was ashamed of my childish cowardice, the fault of my sister Margot, who was the stupidest little creature that ever existed. I passed, with precaution, and was exulting in my victory when the presbytery dog came barking to the gate. I trembled. What to do? Behind me, the dreadful caterpillar had reached the middle of the road; in front the formidable spaniel held the way. I stood immovable, pale and trembling. A young girl passed, that dear being in whom my faith was still unshaken, for I had heard no ill of her and felt none through her;* she saw that I was afraid of the dog, but did not guess at the other horror; I pointed to the monster, and she crushed it without laughing at me; then led me by the hand to the central square. There, for the first time, I felt embarrassed with men; I blushed. Pretty Reine Miné, my escort, kissed me and left me with the woman I was seeking.

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*It was during this first visit to Vermenton, that I was seen and petted by "Her" whom I shall henceforth call Colette and Madame Parangon: and it was then presumably that she first took a liking for me. I remember vaguely that she had an angelic expression and gave me a feeling of greater security than any of the other Fair. She was then twelve – seven years older than myself – and even at that age, she was intelligent, thoughtful and sensitive. Her caresses were affectionate and tender, unlike those of the other girls who were young madcaps. Colette was the first to kiss me on the lips, and a sweet tremor stirred me. Yet I can witness that her caresses held no moral taint, for their memory never troubled my senses with voluptuous excitement.

*Alas! my native ignorance, such as that of Adam and Eve in Eden, did not last long. Mathron (Marthe Belin) became pregnant whilst still unwed; the young men made a song about her, blaming the Curé, which made all the girls lower their eyes. This coarse song profaned women in my mind, which is an irreparable mischief to anyone's morals. And my loss was double, because my faith in the priest was affected, and my respect for him. Thus little by little the child is left with no restraining influence before the parents are even aware of it. How can this contagion be avoided? Perhaps it is necessary for them to be inoculated with vice!

An incident, trifling in itself yet demonstrating my extreme physical sensibility, occurred when my sister Margot was dressing me one day and she took it into her head to tickle me. I fainted completely. The others thought she had struck me, and would not take my own word for it that she was innocent. At the instance of my elder sisters, Marie, Marianne and Madeleine, all of them great puritans, M. le Curé was made use of to expose Margot's supposed falsehood in confession; for confession serves all purposes in the country. The girl explained what had happened, and my parents were the more disturbed. They said to each other: "He will never live!"

If Margot was fully justified by confession in this instance, I do not know how she would have extricated herself from another imprudence, incredible almost, and yet evidence of her simplicity. One day she took myself and Marie-Louison, who was about my own age, into a field of tall hemp, and there: *disposuit nos ignorantissime, quemquem nostrum sedentem e regione, dicendo: "Hem! Coite! . . ." Maria-Ludovicella, pro sua intelligentia, obediebat; ast ego nec voluntatem, neque facultatem habebam, et nihil nisi conatus inertes efficiebam. Erubuit tandem Margaritella, et nos dimisit integros, fando: "Sulti vos; abite! . . ."* I have never been able to conceive what was her object; she was then thirteen. Probably a boy had told her something, or she had been witness of some such scene as those I have already described. . . . And it is said that innocence dwells in villages! Wherever there are men and women, ferment and corruption are there also.

I made my first friendship at the age of six. Exquisite sentiment, to which I have always responded as tenderly as I have to love, may you survive love in my heart as you preceded it there! . . . My first friend was my neighbour, born on the same day as myself, and called Edme (or, as they say in those parts, M'lo) Bérault. I was deeply attached to him; but I was dimly aware that his response to my affection was feeble and that his sluggish nature was not as sensitive and delicate as my own. This made me unhappy and, to win his heart, I gave him presents; a means as ineffectual with thankless friends as with those vile creatures who masquerade as women. I was beginning to love solitude, moved by an impulse which I can now interpret: it was pride. I felt that I could not excel by merit; I did not understand the value of my beauty in a place where that of the flowers passed unperceived and animals were only esteemed for their strength and usefulness; and also it had brought upon me nothing but discomfort in Sacy. I felt myself weak, ignorant and incapable. I was the plaything of the big girls, who fondled me for their own amusement, or rather to excite the young men; and these I could not endure for their jeering and malicious air; men seemed hard to me. I was fond enough of the old of either sex, because they praised me, spoke reasonably to me and never laughed at me. But the company of my schoolfellow was delightful! With him I felt myself in unison, and tasted the pleasures of equality. I played the man when talking to him, and copied my father as he appeared, in the tales he sometimes told us of himself and his childhood's friends. If, as do some parents, he had only related his immoral exploits, my judgment would have been perverted past repair. I do not know whether I had heard caves talked about, or whether the desire for some sort of lair is natural to us, but there was a little clay quarry near to my father's house for which I took an affection. I made a kind of seat there, collected some trifles belonging to my mother and sister, and made a little home according to my childish means, not forgetting a *prie-dieu* and crucifix. When all was to my liking, I took M'lo Bérault by the hand, and led him there. I was longing to enjoy his surprise and gratitude when I told him he was to have a half share in my cave. He was hardly at all surprised or excited; but he liked the retreat because it was cool. . . . We agreed to go there every day and not to tell anyone about it. I was beside myself with joy. It was my delight to provide a little collation for M'lo every day. The dishes were not costly, nor difficult to come by; the little peasant was accustomed only to have brown bread, but at home we always ate white, and that was a treat to him. Sometimes I added walnuts; sometimes green peas, raw or as they are eaten on the first Sunday in Lent; sometimes lentils; and, on baking days, scones or *fouasse* (cake baked under ashes), which we found quite delicious! Sometimes my nurse, who kept a lot of bees, would give me honey; at other times she gave me raisin wine or dried raisins, and hazelnuts; I took everything to the grotto, and my pleasure in eating these delicacies was doubled because Edmlot shared them with me. (So, later, I intensified the pleasures of love, by relating them to my friend Loiseau.) . . . I won his attachment by my gifts, and was the happier for it.

One day we were eating raw peas, and threw away those which the worms had spoilt on to the fallen earth in the quarry. It rained next day, and for a whole week; so that we could not visit our retreat. At the end of this time, as it was fine again, we went back there and – oh, wonder! – we found a garden of growing peas! Our surprise was as great as our joy, and this was the greatest we had ever felt; above all when in a pea not wholly covered with earth we recognised a wormy one that we had thrown away. "Can they be our peas?" we asked each other in amazement. Plants born by our means! It was a kind of fatherhood: what glory! No military commander after a brilliant victory could have thought more highly of himself, and we surveyed our first production with tireless delight. It was our field, our garden, our orchard, our domain, our kingdom; we had an impotent longing to shut it in with a fence. Thus is born the lust for property, the source of vice and misfortune to unhappy mortals, and it is impossible that it should not be born. We visited our garden every day; each unfolding leaf was a bourgeoning in our own existence. It was too great a happiness for me to keep to myself. "Papa," I said one evening, "I have some peas, and they are growing, just as if you had sown them yourself." "Aha! that's good! If our crop fails we will fall back on yours." "But it does not all belong to me; Edmlot Bérault has half." "Then we will divide the crop." What happiness! In the depths of my heart, I wanted my father's crop to fail, so that mine should be used. From that time, the only real glory lay for me in usefulness, and such work as I have done is owing to this singleness of view.

A little later, after two days' rain, we found our peas in flower: a new rapture! Everything filled us with amazement, everything was marvellous and a delight. . . . The pods formed, they filled; the time for picking them was already near when one day, unable to find M'lo, I went alone to our kingdom. Good God! What havoc, what devastation! The plants had been stripped; the freshly opened shells looked as though they had been scoured by a glutton who had just made his dinner there; crumbs of brown bread were scattered about the ground. I was near to fainting! I made my way home with tears in my eyes and a heavy heart. Ah! if I had been a man and a king, what implacable war would I not have waged on the brigands who had ravished the crop of the first ground that I had ever sown!

The bell rang for school. I went there: I saw M'lo, who kept his eyes glued to his book. I was too honest to suspect him, and only learnt the truth ten years later. This miserable experience cured me for a long time of the mania for property; it was completely dead in me, not to be reborn until a good deal later.

When I was nearly seven, I witnessed a scene, surprising in itself and a further proof that the human species, when together in any number, is almost as depraved in the country as in the town; and this without reckoning the vice which is brought there from the towns, by male and female servants and by soldiers who return corrupted to their villages. About a dozen boys of twice my age, that is to say at the age of puberty, used to give a kind of *display* in the sunshine by the Là-bas gate (the Eastern gate was called Là-haut). I cannot be more explicit,* and would not mention this incident without important reason. Does nature teach us the physiology of love at the close of adolescence, or do we know it only through what we have seen and heard? I think that nature left to herself would act very slowly, and that she would teach in dreams. But one word is enough, and that word is always spoken, even if the parents are isolated in the country and without servants. Enlightenment being then inevitable, what is to be done? We must imitate nature, who gives knowledge when she gives power. But if knowledge is come by accidentally, should we speak to children? Yes, to frighten them with physical ill-consequences. So did a wise friend keep me from excess between the age of twenty-one and twenty-five. With youth, to delay the first outbreak is the whole battle; for the chief danger lies in a discrepancy between strength and precocious desire. To withhold premature enlightenment, parents should, as in the past, send their children from the table when there are strangers present, and keep them occupied, under their own supervision, with country work and shepherding – a thing no longer possible. As for parents in large cities, it may be that they have only the poor remedy of themselves instructing their children, thus administering the antidote with the poison.*

**Omnes, sine verecundia, mentulas exhibentes, ad retractionem præputii certatim ludebant. An ad emissionem usque seminis eruperunt, non potui, pro ætate mea, distinguere; sed erubescere vidi neminem.*

It was at the time of this *display* that I remember having seen the famous comet of 1740 or 41. I heard the Abbé Thomas discuss this subject with another seminarist of Auxerre.

My seventh year came to an end at last.† M'lo Bérault was still my friend; I had no suspicion of the dishonesty, or rather greed, which had made him devour the harvest of our common field. One day when I went to fetch

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*"I was witness of the following incident in Paris: a widower had a pretty only daughter, whom he was forced to bring up away from home. He found that the conversation of her friends, and even of the mistress of the house herself, had dangerously enlightened the girl; and frightened, yet unable to take her away, he pondered sadly what to do. Nothing occurred to his troubled mind, so he consulted J.-J. Rousseau, whom he knew and often saw. 'Complete the girl's enlightenment yourself,' replied the Citizen of Geneva, 'tell her everything, but as a doctor would. Speak of the physical aspect; explain how conception takes place, describe pregnancy with its attendant discomforts, and how the fœtus is nourished. Tell her of labour and, without too much scaring her imagination, present the details of it with a truthfulness that will extinguish passion. Nothing drives out thoughts of love like its inevitable consequences. Dwell on the necessity of giving the mother's breast to the child, and the ravages produced by suckling. Give examples; there are plenty in Paris! Finally, go further, and, with proper discretion, tell her something of the dangers of syphilis. Your daughter will not like these details (for we should have missed our object if she did like them); she will ask you to spare her, and then you will stop. But be sure that she will never again listen to obscene conversation at school; you will have taken away its chief attraction: curiosity. She will know more than any of the others, and will combine two images which will counterbalance each other: voluptuous caresses, and a woman's cries in labour. Before the latter image fades, as it does in women, she will be saved. But I will not disguise the fact that this extreme remedy contains a poison which will leave its trace; your daughter will never be as happy or as pure as if she had not heard these obscene discussions; you will only have managed to avert her ruin.' The Father followed this advice to the letter, and the result was exactly what the philosopher had predicted." (*Lettres sur J.-J. Rousseau,* by L. B. D. P.)

†For two years I had ceased to be the only child of the second marriage. Twin sisters had been given to me. I do not remember having had any idea of my mother's pregnancy, proof of the modesty with which she conducted it. I was sent to my nurse for that day, which very much surprised me, for I loved going back to her and was always scolded when I did so without permission. On my return I saw two infants and was told they were my sisters. I was wonderstruck, and asked a host of questions which were not answered. I racked my brains all the evening. There was my mother ill; I thought from fatigue. My father was up and about as usual, but I knew he was stronger than she. For I imagined that they had made the two children during the day from their own flesh and blood. How, I did not know.

him for school, his mother said to us: "You are seven to-day, children; for you were born on the same day and almost at the same hour. You are now of an age to sin and lose your innocence; whereas before, being without reason, you could not sin. Now you will have to be very good, both of you." M'lo listened dully to this little lesson, which was as good as another, but it frightened me! I was charmed to be seven, and to discover that I was a reasonable being; but the thought of sin, of which my mother's teaching had given me a horror, pained me. I left Mère Bérault's house with tears in my eyes. Filled with respect for my new-found reason, I was as modest and contrite as a little girl making her first communion. We went to school. My behaviour was exemplary. As I was usually something of a fidget, Maître Jacques noticed this, and asked smiling: "What is the matter with you, Monsieu' Nicolas?" "I am seven to-day, Monsieu' l'Maître, and now I am going to sin and offend God! I would like to prevent it if I could." "That is easy: you have only to do your duty always." This vague answer satisfied me, and I think it is the only good one Maître Jacques ever gave me.

School over, we went out. I could think of nothing but the wonder of being seven, and no longer a child without reason; for I attributed a real virtue to my newly acquired age. In my enthusiasm, I became a poet: I took hands with M'lo and another schoolfellow, Etienne Dumont, his cousin, and we sang my first verses:

Ta-la-la, my children, cheer!
We have reached our seventh year.

I went to convey the news to my sisters and they were astonished at my excessive joy; for they did not understand the cause of it – my desire to grow and be a man. My father and mother had more insight; they discovered the way in which I had been made aware of my age, and took advantage of this to give me some instruction, to which I listened sensibly. I realised that they did not altogether approve of what Madame Bérault had said to me, but their reasons for this were beyond me.

One year was added to another. I was eight when my father left his house by the Là-bas gate to go and live at la Bretonne, where there was a farm. Thus I was the length of the village away from M'lo: for la Bretonne is by the Là-haut gate and more than three hundred paces beyond the walls. The waters of la Farge were flowing then, and this was enough to interrupt my commerce with the village. I saw no more of my first friend; he was replaced by the son of a daughter-in-law of Christophe Berthier,* Etienne Dumont, who was now my closest neighbour, and he inspired a warmer and more lasting affection. Etienne's mother, by reason of her birth

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*Marie Disson of the Auxerre Dissons, a worthy family, and daughter-in-law of my father's honoured schoolmaster, was a midwife. Her father had borne the title of *Monsieur* Disson, and it was still given to her brother, although he had become a peasant. In the villages equals call each other simply by their Christian names: but a stranger coming from a town is *Monsieur* by right. In the same way, if a man prospers so that he has a house larger than the others and roofed with tiles, a carriage entrance, and the curé to eat with him, the villagers call him *Monsieur* of their own accord, and his sons also. Later his daughters are called *Demoiselles*: but to earn this title they must wear indoor gowns; as for the wife, she becomes *Madame* when her husband becomes *Monsieur*. My father was called *Monsieur le Lieutenant*; my mother *Madame la Lieutenante*. Of my elder brothers, the first two were abbés and the third a surgeon, and therefore all were *Monsieurs*. I was called *Monsieur Nicolas* because of my relationship to all these and because I was rather better dressed than the other little peasants. My step-sisters were never called by anything but their Christian names, probably because their mother, Marie Dondène, never wore the indoor gown. Nothing of this is very important: but I tell it because a Parisian, who knows about the customs of the Iroquois, the Hurons, the Anabaquis, is completely ignorant of the customs in the villages and country districts of France. . . . A physical reflection occurs to me: how easy it is to change the habits of the man-child! He adapts himself materially as do the animals. In a few days, what he no longer sees is forgotten. It must be admitted that my second friend had a pretty sister and was more amiable than the first, for whom indeed everyone cried shame on me, but without alienating me from him: so that *solus amabam*.

and first marriage with a Berthier, was distinguished from the other villagers by her manners and good breeding. She always welcomed me kindly when I fetched her son to go to school. Fanchon Berthier, daughter of the first husband and a pretty brunette of about fourteen, made me even more welcome. All this strengthened my attachment to my new friend. His mother was also the midwife, or Good-Wife as the peasants say. Parisians are not aware that in our distant villages, where old customs are still preserved, the mid-wife is as much honoured as were the Vestals in Rome. She is not called *madame*, or very rarely, and never by her own name or by her husband's; she is the *Good-Wife*, and by this title alone she wins a tender veneration. The Good-Wife was touched by the friendship I showed for her son, and persuaded him to respond to it; but though Etienne was less limited than M'lo, he had not my energy; he did not feel all the charm his presence lent to the amusements we shared. If he had, I think we might have done things as astonishing as those wonders of friendship recounted of the young Greeks.

A year had passed away since my parents had moved to la Bretonne, and I was about nine. The natural tendencies expressed in earliest childhood became more marked with the years; and it would give a wrong impression, at least for a time, if I did not pause to describe them now. The most noble of all passions smouldered in my breast, and gave off sparks from time to time before I was capable of response. This impotence was the result of bodily conformation, and therefore insurmountable, so it found expression in that active and painful impulse which is habitually felt by eunuchs. And it was this impotent passion which made me shy and wild. I was handsome: my hair, at that time a golden chestnut, curled naturally, making me look like one of those angels, children of the laughing imagination of Italian painters. Dignity was added to the delicacy of my face by an aquiline nose and fine eyes; and by the fresh scarlet of my lips, which have earned me so many happy adventures. I was pale with the whiteness of a lily; slim and graceful in a district where the build is heavy, and this gave me a *knowing* look, they used to say. They still tell how the young men, annoyed because the girls caressed a mere child, a forward darling, so freely, shamed me by calling out: "Baby boy, baby boy, kissed by a girl!" They succeeded only too well in making me ashamed! But the girls, who saw through them, were piqued, and one Sunday on coming out from Mass, I found myself surrounded by Reine Miné, the two Champeaux, Jeanne and Madeleine, Agathe Tilhein, Madelon Blondin, Marie Menant, Mathron or Marthe Bérault, Ursule Ledme, Nannon Fouard (elder sister of Marie) – in short, by all the marriageable girls. They kissed me at their pleasure – on the cheeks, on the mouth, and even playfully slapped me. I resisted more and more vigorously, thereby provoking still livelier onslaughts. I suffered and rejoiced at the same time. When they let me go, the lads began to shout: "Baby, baby, kissed by ten girls!" Their jeering covered me with shame, and I fled. From that day, I could not leave the house without the boys running up to set the girls after me. Not daring to kiss them themselves, because of their parents and the priest, they enjoyed seeing them tumble me. I ran away, the girls chased me. It became a custom at Sacy to kiss *little Monsieur Nicolas* by force, and this greatly mortified me, and stole away the last refuge of my trust in the human race. However the use of force to caress me and also the publicity, which revolted my natural modesty, probably delayed an eruption which would have destroyed me. Compulsion and ridicule made me shun all that naturally I would have most desired.

Very advanced ideas revolved, at times, in my little head. And, curiously enough, I often pictured to myself how pleasant it would be to kiss a girl against her will; to feel her shy, shrinking; to make her fly, and then to pursue her. This, I felt, was my proper part, and I burned to fulfil it. Far from being proud of my beauty, it seemed to me womanish, degrading, and quite opposed to that conquering masculinity which would make the girls respect me. An anecdote which concerns this period well illustrates this seemingly strange idea.

A pedlar from Noyers, named Madame Geneviève, often called at our house. She had a man who was not her husband to look after the cart, and this was my first introduction to such irregularities. Monsieur Comtois was a great, strong man, heavily pock-marked, with bold eyes and his hat always well to one side. His appearance satisfied me; he was my idea of a man, and I wanted to be like him. I imagined how, had I his impressive ugliness, the girls would run from me; and the thought made me shiver with pleasure. It was enough only to see how my sisters and the two servants fled from the formidable Comtois, who always caught them nevertheless. I saw how shy they were when he held them captive; he was a hero, a terrible conqueror. How magnificent seemed his part to me! I compared it sadly with my own: "Ah! When shall I too be pockmarked?" I would exclaim. I told everyone that I wanted to have the smallpox so that I might look like Monsieur Comtois. And they laughed at me, for he was one of the ugliest men that could well be met with, but tall, square-set and splendidly built. Also he pleased Mme Geneviève, who was by no means displeasing to me – another reason for envying his good fortune: to be ugly and to be loved!

My ideas about women grew clearer little by little; I thought them all that was lovable, only I wanted it to be I that kissed them, and not they me: for I disliked the latter part, and yet the former would have been absurd in a little boy of nine. Thus, while my parents felt secure in the conviction that their Hippolytus detested women; while the rumour of my antipathy for the sex spread beyond the village by reason of the number of people entertained by my father; while little Monsieur Nicolas passed everywhere for a Narcissus: when he was alone, he thought of nothing, by night or day, but the sex he seemed to shun! The girls who bestowed most care upon their persons were naturally those most attractive to me; and, as the part which touches the ground is the most difficult to keep clean, my attention automatically turned first to the shoes. The girls already mentioned: Agathe Tilhein, Reine Miné, and, above all, Madeleine Champeaux, were the smartest in the village and their elegant well-tended shoes, instead of laces or buckles (not yet in use at Sacy), had blue or pink ribbons according to the colour of the skirt. My dreams of these girls were troubled; I wanted . . . I did not know what; but I wanted something, in the nature of subjugation.

It was at this time that I saw a young lady in Sacy. She was daintily shod, as if for the town, in coloured shoes with buckles set with brilliants, and was otherwise quite charming. I was dazzled by her, and thought at first she was that young and ravishing Colette who, in my childhood, had fondled me so tenderly at Vermenton; but I heard at home that she was a young lady from Noyers, named Suzanne Colas, a relative of the priest. She had so delicate a bloom that, at first sight, I took her for a fairy, knowing nothing yet of goddesses. I dreamed only of her; she made me faithless to the robuster beauties of Sacy; frail and delicate myself, I doubtless thought that she would be easier to subjugate. Suzanne vanished, and was forgotten; but she had added to the charm which bound me to women, and prepared the way for the profound impression that an angel among women was to make upon me.

I doubt if even a little negro, though mature so young that he can be a father at nine or ten, could have desired women at an earlier age than I. Soon it will be seen that I achieved a similar maturity, and this phenomenon is not the least striking, nor the least interesting in my life. But this passion for the beauty of the foot – so powerful that it has never failed to rouse desire in me, and could render me oblivious even to ugliness – does it spring from the body or the mind? In all those who have it, it is there to excess; on what is it founded? Is it related to a light ease in walking? To the sensuous grace of the dance? A factitious passion for shoes is but a reflection of that for the beautiful feet which give grace even to animals; one grows accustomed to think of the envelope as the thing itself. Thus the attraction which dainty shoes have had for me from childhood is an artificial taste based on a natural one; whereas my passion for a little foot has a physical cause only, indicated in the proverb: *Parvus pes, barathrum grande,* the facility thus given being favourable to procreation.* I will try to make myself clearer in the note.

**Aperta vulva semper facilitat intromissionem ac projectum seminis in uterum.* And here is an observation which also turns on beauty of shape in the feet. In the course of my manhood, I have known, among others, two women whose feet and legs were perfect: the first was Rosette, of the rue Fossés-Saint-Germain, who for a long time acted as model to the pupils of a well-known painter; the second was the pretty Harris, daughter of a box-maker in the Rue Vieille-Bouclerie. Circumstances having brought me into intimate relations with these two women, I am convinced that, from head to foot, they have beauty in a rare degree, *præsertim ad mammas et ad concham Veneris; cujus venustas præcellebat super quasquas venustates quæ vidi possunt in cæteris mulieribus.* Their faces were not beautiful, but they were beyond measure lovable. Their feet were not of the smallest, but they were exquisitely formed; they did not distort the shoe, they made it perfect. It is only when small feet are plump and short that they indicate an openness in nature, as in a shoe. And it must not be forgotten that such a *barathrum* facilitates enjoyment for those on the threshold of manhood.

When I went into a house and saw the holiday shoes paraded in a row, as is the custom, I thrilled with pleasure: I blushed, I lowered my eyes, as if in the presence of the wearers.* Yet with this violent proclivity and an imaginative sensuality incredible in a boy of ten, an involuntary modesty, superficially the same as that natural in the young, made me fly from the girls, whom I adored even to their insentient clothing. Two old men (M. Restif of Noyers, grandfather of the Grenoble Restifs,† and my cousin Droin of the Villages by the river), deceived by my exterior and observing that I lowered long-fringed lids over great eyes at the lightest word of praise, said to my parents: "This son of yours is just a bashful girl; are you sure of his sex?" I imagine that all men who are violently moved towards women,‡ have this same bashfulness, this same timidity, the same factitious leanings: for they feel in their impubic youth what others are only aware of later. So must the most bashful and blushing girl be considered the one who is most inclined towards the pleasures of love. . . . That my impotence was the true reason why I ran away from pretty girls is otherwise confirmed, in that I did not shun the old or ugly, nor blush with them for being ill-dressed or when I made mistakes. Often the ugliest girls in Sacy took it into their heads to run after me. I stayed for them. They were astonished, and every one concluded that I liked old and ugly women. I have heard my father himself express astonishment at my eccentric tastes, and fear that they might indicate depravity; especially as my conduct gave other reason for complaint. For I wanted to have a hand in everything and improve on it; usually I spoilt it, which earned me the little creditable nickname of Spoil-all. One day my father adroitly induced Germain the waggoner to question me about my singular tastes: "No," I replied, "I do not like ugly women, but I am not afraid of them." This reassured Edme Restif.

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*Somewhat later, when I saw a pretty shoe at a cobbler's in Courgis, and was told that it belonged to Jeannette Rousseau, I came near to fainting. . . . I adored Madame Parangon's shoes. . . .

†I only once saw this M. Restif, who was cousin-german to my grandfather. He is referred to in the *Vie de Mon Père*, published 1779.

‡*Ob amplitudinem testiculorum, longitudinemque gracilis veretri.* . . . And this was also the cause of that ungovernable eroticism, which was to torment the best years of my life.

To return from church, since we had moved to La Bretonne, I had to traverse the whole length of the village: one street with a hundred and twenty-five houses on either side of it. It was the feast of Saint-Nicolas; the big boys paid for the mass and the little ones were present at it. At this time there were three Nicolas of different ages in Sacy: *Grand-Colas*, long as a pole; *Colas-Chabin*, so called from his hideous mop of frizzy hair; and lastly Monsieur Nicolas, the youngest of the three. My sisters dressed me up for the day "like a little cherub", as they put it. On leaving the church the big girls stood on either side of the steps (as had the young men on Sainte-Catherine's day) to watch the procession, and said to each other: "P'tit-Colas is better got up than l'Grand; he has a finer hat and a finer nosegay," etc. Grand-Colas was a sufficiently bad character, and his tall, gaunt figure, and the heavy stoop that made him look as though he was afraid to show his ignoble features, indicated this; Colas-Chabin was a sneak with a face like a rhinoceros. The first was leader in the festival, the second his lieutenant. Both would have been delighted had the girls pursued, or even been able to endure them. They had joined me at the stoup and offered me their protection: "The girls are waiting for you," they said, "and the three Colas should stand together. Walk between us." I trusted them; and in fact Grand-Colas was so much feared and hated that no girl dared come near me. I was walking proudly between my two namesakes, when I realised that I had betrayed myself into the hands of traitors. We had reached the *Croix-du-Reposoir*, which is about a third of the way through the village, when I saw, rather too late, that Grand-Colas was abandoning me to two groups of girls, one in front of us and the other twenty paces behind. I tried to escape, but was surrounded in a moment. Never had I looked so handsome, never was I so much petted. But soon the marauding party became in turn the prey of the big satyr and his friend. When they saw that the girls were busy with me, they attacked them without mercy. "Ah, you wanted the little one," they jeered, "and here is the big one . . . and here is the middle one." They tore off the girls' rings, and did not desist until every finger was bare. I meantime made good my escape, and fled like a little hunted fawn, clearing all obstacles, and jumping lightly over the arms of six girls who barred my way. "A roebuck!" exclaimed the men. "A greyhound!" answered the women. At home they laughed at all this, not seeing the slightest danger to me in it. But apart from the moral objection, of which they did not dream, it was to drive me into real physical peril.

Escaped from the last group of girls, I went on my way quietly, thinking I had outstripped them all. But I descried someone by the Porte Là-haut and, unable to go back, I plunged through an opening which led to the pond. To my painful surprise it was surrounded by boys who were sounding the ice, as yet too thin to bear. A dozen girls saw me, and raised a shout. The matter seemed too serious for hesitation. At the dreaded cry: "Here comes Monsieur Nicolas! Here comes the Savage!" twelve times repeated, I flew across the ice, broken only that morning to water the animals, and crossed the pond so quickly that, though it cracked beneath my feet, there was not time for me to go through. I scaled the La Bretonne wall, and from there looked back at the girls who stood motionless upon the banks. Fanchon

Berthier, Etienne's sister, almost fainted with terror on hearing the ice cracking under me, for it covered six feet of water in which I should certainly have been drowned.

Following my unmerited punishment by Maître Jacques three or four years previously, my parents had decided to board me with my sister Anne at Vermenton. The danger I had just run, which frightened them all the more because a boy fell through the ice in trying to imitate me, made them determine to send me for the second time to live with my sister-godmother. And they were the more inclined to this plan since my brother and godfather had just been appointed *vicaire** of that town. They had hardly grasped what a pupil of Jansenist priests is like, or that he is prevented by the spirit of Jansenism from doing anything for his carnal parents.

This decision was taken on the 6th of December, but it was not given effect until the 29th of June, when the school shut, not to reopen until after the vintage. On that day there was a pilgrimage to a shrine near Crevan, called *La Vierge d'Harbeaux.* There is a fountain belonging to the chapel, which has other properties besides that of quenching thirst; I will not specify these, but it has often made girls fecund. As I had frequently manifested an extreme aversion from leaving my native place, devoted as I was to the ram which I had reared myself, to the bees I tended, etc., a trick was used to get me away: a pilgrimage to Harbeaux with my sister Margot was proposed, and she had instructions to leave me at Vermenton on the way back. I saw the shrine and drank the water, which I found excellent for I was thirsty, ate cherries of which I was passionately fond, and then we returned to Vermenton. Here my sister made me stay, promising to fetch me on the first market Friday. When my sister-godmother enlightened

*The *Curé* is the spiritual pastor for the whole district and the *vicaire* is his assistant. [Ed.]

me after Margot's departure, the idea of all that I had left behind struck me with such anguish that I fainted quite away, and remained in a sort of stupor, which so frightened my sister that she ran in search of the vicaire (my brother godfather). I partly recovered consciousness while he was talking to me, but only half understood what he said. My head seemed full of whirling vapours. I remained motionless, insensible. At last my tears began to flow and this brought relief. Such is my impression of a state which was less the result of an emotional attachment for my parents, as was thought, than of a physical holding to my native soil and all my varied and delightful business there, with bees and lambs and all the animals about the house, whose protector and foster-father I was. Ever since we had gone to live there, this half-wild la Bretonne had had an inexpressible charm for me; it was as are their mountains to the Swiss. I had to be sent home every Saturday, where I stayed over Sunday and only returned on Monday morning to go to school. The road from Sacy to Vermenton is not agreeable: it climbs the rugged hill of Tartre and runs under arid fields until it drops again at Terrapion, an even rougher hill, as its name, meaning that one must dismount for it, denotes. But carriages have been able to pass over it for more than a century, since the irregularities formed by its stony channels have been somewhat levelled. From the top of this hill, Vermenton may be seen; it was a considerable village, which seemed a town beside Sacy, and my poor heart would contract, distressed and saddened by the pride of its buildings compared to my humble village. Contrarily, when Saturday brought me back to my own country and, from the top of Tartre, I discerned the thatched cottages of the dear hamlet and, further on, the newly whitewashed walls of La Bretonne; the woods of Nitry and of Sacy on either side and Boutparc in the middle, my heart leapt and expanded; I shouted for joy; I flew.

But going down Terrapion I was like a man going to execution. Dare I confess the thought that more than once occurred to me? I would have liked to see Vermenton swallowed up or in flames, that I might have an excuse for returning to Sacy! . . . Alas! the all-powerful charm of solitude is destroyed for me; but I still have an understanding of the mortal nostalgia felt by the Swiss exiled from home. Perhaps no one ever felt this sickness as I did, not even excepting the Swiss when they hear their cow-calls pealing.

I was least unhappy at school, during my exile, because I had companions of my own age there. . . .* Although I was uncouth and wild at this time, I sometimes went to play with the young Viards, one of whom meant to become a painter, and with the Boudards, who were nephews of my step-sisters' mother; and these took me to see M. Collet, notary and judge, and an old friend of my father. There were four or five handsome girls at home, and one of them, whom I named Colette, showed me great kindness: she always took my part when they laughed at my rustic manners or ridiculed my simplicity. One evening, when she had noticed me weeping, she came to me and gently asked the reason for my tears. "Because I long for home," I answered, ". . . and . . . for our honey bees, and my ram . . . and pear tree . . . and then there is the orchard . . . and Etienne Dumont . . . and my father and mother; and I do not like being here." "With us?" "Oh, no; but with my brother, Michel Linard." "And with us?" "Oh, it is not Sacy! I am only happy at la Bretonne." "But why?" "Because one sees nobody, and I do not like people." "But," (and she smiled at my ingenuousness) "do you not like us, my sisters and me?" "Here – nothing, nothing!" "And me?" (kind Colette was holding my hands as she talked to me, and I felt her tenderness). "Oh, yes," I said sobbing, "you!" "Poor child," said Colette to her sisters, "if his parents do not take him away soon, he will die here. For really that Michel Linard is unbearable! . . ."* Ah! once more home again, and to stay there, I was often to think of Colette; her memory was sweeter than her presence and, for a long time, her dear image made my dreams beautiful. I used even to climb to the top of rugged Terrapion, to contemplate the town I had so lately feared, and to say tenderly: "That is where Mlle Colette is, the dear friend of my father and mother, and much prettier than M. l'Curé's cousin, Ma'm'selle Colas." But nothing in the world would have made me go down into Vermenton, for the vague fear that I should be kept there.

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*I nearly fretted myself to death while with Mme Linard, no doubt because of her husband's punctilious disposition. His constant scrutiny, his minute attention to each one of my actions, inhibited me to the point where I could not eat in his presence, and so began to waste through lack of food; they had to give me a little table to myself. I remember I was given some veal, as a special delicacy; but at this time I abhorred equally unseasoned meat, leeks, and sugar, but I was passionately fond of honey, salted fish, etc. This aversion from onions and leeks seems to me physical proof that I descend directly from the Gauls, for my natural tastes are entirely for the products indigenous to our climate. The monkey belongs to warm countries, and is naturally fond of onions, which he will devour to the very leaves! So I loved garlic, and would eat it to the leaves with my bread. Now everything that I disliked was served at my brother-in-law's table, and I threw the nauseous stuff to the animals. Linard was astonished at my repugnance to such good food and wanted to overcome it, nearly causing my death. Should we force children to eat everything? No, this is to change the race-nature and to cause illness and vice. It was necessary to send me home, where my exhaustion vanished completely within a week.

When I returned to my village, without doubt through the intervention of Mlle Colette, it was thought that my stay abroad had inured me to my fellows, but it was very soon clear that I was only the shyer for it; and the girls began to pursue me again. Yet no danger came near me through these simple villagers; it came through a stranger. . . .Though still so young, I was on the point of the most extraordinary adventure of my life, both in itself and in its consequences!

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*Reader, this charming girl was to become *Madame Parangon*!

I have said that the young Rameaus were my schoolfellows; for Edmond, François, Charles and Louis, and their sister Madelon, took lessons with Maître Jacques only; and I have described how their mother hated me, though she loaded me with caresses. Her sons were thick-headed and unintelligent; and village talk set them below me, although they were richer. Their mother knew this and suffered in her love for them. She had tried to ruin me with Messire Antoine Foudriat, and would have succeeded with any other man; but he read her heart. In spite of this, praise and kindnesses were showered upon me in her own house. But she only behaved so in order to make me stumble into some fault, of which she hoped to take advantage to discredit me. The maternal hatred which I roused in this woman is one of the most singular experiences of my boyhood. The only harm she actually did to me was to prevent Messire Antoine from teaching me the elements of Latin, as was his wish. But it is impossible to estimate how positive and irreparable was this injury; Messire Antoine was a philosopher, and would quickly have formed my mind and character. . . . His portrait occurs in the *Vie de Mon Père*.

In August of this same year, Mme Rameau had a pretty reaper from Percy-le-Sec, where her husband lived; for though this couple agreed very well together, they dwelt apart; the mother lived with the children on the farm at Sacy, while the father cultivated the more considerable property at Percy. The reaper was a plump, bouncing, goodnatured girl, of such voluptuous curves that she excited the jealousy of Mme Rameau – quite wrongly, I may add: the automaton she called husband was wedded to his fields and slept with his wife's fortune, which was the only thing he enjoyed. Husband and wife exchanged reapers; the stalwart Mathron of Sacy, ugly as a female pawnbroker's conscience, was sent to Percy, and the tempting Nannette came to her master's wife. I saw Nannette in church at the feast of the Assumption, when all the girls are dressed in white. I was struck by her appearance, but in a fashion not till then experienced. It was desire that I felt and not love: a burning fire ran through my veins: Nannette was for me the first woman. I was dumbfounded by this new, this prodigious reaction! . . . Was it caused by the kind of her beauty, which appealed only to the senses, as does that of so many women whom I have met during the thirty years of my complete manhood? . . . When Nannette went out, I followed her to see her better, and my imagination was finally inflamed. There was a something lascivious about her which I had never before seen, even in the beautiful Ursule Lamas of Nitry, of whom I shall be telling shortly. I followed her as closely as possible to the Rameau's gateway, soaking myself in voluptuous sensation. Later, when I was in our orchard, I remembered that "display" already described, given by the lads at the Là-bas gate; and I touched myself . . . not yet with a polluting hand, but seeking the cause of a new phenomenon, *altæ rigidæque erectionis*. . . . On my way to Mass next day, I called, despite my bashfulness, at the Rameaus', to fetch the boys and their sister Madelon, that we might go to church together. I overheard Mlle Rameau whisper to the handsome reaper: "Look, Nannette, you see that great gawk? If you tried to kiss him, he would run away!" Nannette began to laugh, and then, as we were pressed for time, we left at once. On our return from church, my desire to see Nannette again overcame the natural bashfulness which for so long had made me carefully avoid what most attracted me, and I yielded to the urgent invitation of my comrades and to a species of polite force employed by Madelon. Besides, the kindness with which I was always received in this house had a little tamed me. The moment that we were in the courtyard, I noticed Mlle Rameau whispering to the provocative reaper. Madelon was a very different type! She was one of those sexless creatures – neither beautiful nor ugly, without one single charm, completely negative. For women can be negative as well as men: in their case the term applies to those devoid of any attractive quality. I was playing with my friends; and, at a moment when I was hiding in the stable, where the mules were kept which M. Rameau used for his ploughing, Nannette came up softly behind me, and took me by surprise. She held me by my two hands, and said laughing: "I really must kiss you just as much as I like." I feigned a wish to escape, and this augmented her desire. She clasped me to her breast, the most beautiful I had ever seen. Vehemently excited, I returned her kisses. Then she seemed as though taken by a sexual frenzy: she hugged me; she took possession of all my being, and made me handle all of hers. It appeared that this girl was "temperamental" to excess. She turned pale, her knees failed under her; now she pressed me to her, now she pushed me away. Finally she was caught in such a gust of passion, that she must be possessed, and found the means to be so: a new Sappho, she aided nature, made it function, and caused in me a strange convulsion. . . . At this terrible moment of my first reproductive spasm, I swooned. When I came to myself, I was drenched. My playmates were standing round me, and Madelon was saying to Nannette: "You must have tickled him. I forgot to warn you not to. I know from his sister Margot that he faints if he is tickled." Nannette blushed and stammered: "Oh, I didn't know!" All explanations ended there. I myself only had a confused consciousness of what had happened. Thirteen years were to pass away before I saw the consequences: it was by the result that I was one day to know I had been a man at ten and a half. I went sadly home, on the point of fainting at any moment: in a condition, in fact, which verified the proverb, while belying one half of the exception: *Omne animal post coitum triste; excepto gallo-gallinaceo, et scholastico futuente gratis.*

In October I went back to school under Maître Jacques. I had learnt to play truant at Vermenton, and was often away from class, which gave the Rameaus a chance to discredit me with Messire Antoine. I was whipped; a profound humiliation for me and a triumph for Mme Rameau: she paid a visit of condolence to my mother, who was even more deeply mortified than myself. I had not yet begun to write; also I had only learnt to read in Latin, but far from finding fault with this practice, it is a custom of which I approve! It is quite excellent if the principles of this language, mother to our own, are taught at the same time. I found it nothing but a weariness; whereas it was my greatest joy to run about in the meadows of the *Ros* – so called from the water-furrows cut to drain off the water. My parents were less satisfied with me; the tendencies which I displayed augured no good for the future; Miché Linard had soured my character and I seemed averse from all study. I ran away from men; directly a stranger came into the house, I went out of it, not to re-enter until after he had gone. But this, perhaps, was the consequence of a lucky instinct, seeing that the strangers who visited us would only have given me ideas of vice, utterly unknown in my father's house. Indeed I was actually given, in this way, an illustration of bad morals, even more illuminating than that of M. Comtois and Dame Geneviève. The two Restifs of Joux, Jean and Bénigne, often came to the house; I was not afraid of them as I was of others, because of their genial kindliness and peasant attire; I stayed in for them. They gave us news of what was happening to the east of my village, at Lille-sous-Mauréal, where, in a kind of stronghold, a princess of Nassau led a most scandalous life. I listened to their tales and my father's comments, and conceived as great a horror for the word "Nassau" as though I were in danger of turning Dutch myself. I have a confused recollection that an attempt was made to arrest her for debt: she resisted, and was besieged in her castle by creditors and bailiffs. All this began to create in me a kind of immorality, by accustoming me to the existence of vice, the idea of which entered, by this road, into my young soul.

I had had two brothers and a sister since the twin girls: Baptiste, Charles, and Elisabeth. The latter became a nun at Crisenom with the Auxerre Bernadines and, finally, housekeeper to my eldest brother (the Curé of Courgis) and mistress of the school. Marie had been to Paris, where she had just found a husband. The preliminary arrangements for his marriage concluded, the new son-in-law came to stay with us. He never caught sight of me once. I fled the moment he appeared, slept in the hayloft, and only ate what the twins brought to me by stealth. . . . Such was the effect of my stay at Vermenton. Above all, I fled from my brother, the abbé Restif, who whipped me each time he came, to purge me of original sin. There is nothing more inept than a seminarist; no one less fitted to become what is needed; that is, an enlightened pastor: these young people have their heads filled with nothing but mystical trash. My brother-godfather thought it his duty to ask my mother, on his arrival, what little sins I had committed. He was not sparing of instruction, and afterwards he tried, with extreme benignity, to make me understand "that I must be whipped for the good of my soul, and that, by this salutary pain, my expiated fault would be effaced in the sight of God." Excellent for a zealot or for a bigot of the Abbé Restif's age, but he must have been mad to talk thus to a child. I was whipped. On the first occasion, the kindly manner of the operator made me think that he was merely testing my docility; the reality enlightened me. I was surprised a second time, but the Abbé never caught me again; as soon as I got a glimpse of him I made off. One day I hid in the middle of the Près des Rôs, in a hole for retting hemp, and remained in the water until he had gone. I did not run away from either my father or my mother, or from my dear Aunt Madelon of Nitry, nor from Messire Antoine Foudriat; because they behaved suitably towards me. I ran away from anyone who seemed above me: any *Sir* or *Madam* frightened me by their superiority. I loved the poor: I gave them what I could, even to my own dinner: I would beg for them at home. Apparently I only liked to be with people I could dominate.

I had always been passionately fond of birds: it gave me exquisite pleasure to find a nest; I thrilled at the sight, then fell into an ecstasy of admiration. Margot showed me my first nest; I was only three, but I see it even now as though made of silver wire. My passion for nests sometimes led me over vast distances, and into playing truant: it can only be compared to the passion for the chase.

I have said that the girls continued to pursue me. But the daughter of my nurse, Madame Rameau's neighbour, had seen something of what had passed in the stable; and one day she expostulated with them, explaining that I was no longer a child, and that their conduct might make people think ill of them. Also she said to me: "You are too simple. When they try to kiss you, give them as good as you get, as you did with Nannette . . . but not quite so vigorously! You will not have to do it twice; they will soon leave you in peace." The girls thought her protest had been suggested by my nurse; and pretty Marguerite Bourdillat, who was no older than myself, finding me alone one evening had the audacity to say that "she was going to kiss baby." She came towards me; I made no effort to escape: she took hold of me; I hugged her; she kissed me; I kissed her back, three and four times. Finally, my hardy little assailant was first forced to defend herself and then reduced to flight, crying as she ran: "Oh, I thought it was you who would run away!" I replied that "I did not run away any more – and had not for a long time – and that I kissed every girl thrice." "Oh, good! then they will all be caught, for I shall not boast about this. . . ." I was pleased with my first attempt. After she had left me, I passed in front of a group of big girls, who at once surrounded me: I was tempted to fly, but reason triumphed. First I threw my arms round the neck of Reine Miné. "Why, I believe it is he who is doing the kissing!" exclaimed Madeleine Champaut. It was her turn next; and she let me do all that I wanted. I ran up to Agathe and teased her in the same way. The three girls looked at each other in amazement. . . . Women and other girls came up, and applauded my exertions: "Well done!" they cried. "You thought you had only a child to deal with!" "I will make them all kiss me!" I exclaimed. From that day on, no girl dared pursue me. One of my neighbours, a pretty, modest girl, complimented me on my decision, and told me blushing how much she had disapproved of the impudence of the big girls. With very little encouragement, I should have repeated the adventure in the stable with her! But Marguerite did not then give me the opportunity; four years were to pass before an interesting scene took place between us.

Towards the end of July, when the aftergrowth was high enough to graze the horses, the older boys and girls who minded them gathered on the grassland, and amused themselves with pastimes which might well have given some idea of the life of old-time shepherds. In the days of innocence and equality, when children of the rich did the same things as those of the poor, it is certain that the flocks were guarded by the sons and daughters of the house, because it was easy work as compared with following the plough, or dressing the vines, or threshing, etc. It follows that the shepherds and shepherdesses of an agricultural people were actually superior to other labourers; their work was less arduous, more dignified, and more considered; and as the pasture-lands were then less broken by cultivated fields, the herds could wander at will, the shepherds having no other care than to protect them from wild beasts and robbers. They enjoyed an endless leisure and yet were never without occupation to add salt to their pleasures. For, even at the age of which I write, I felt that to be useless was a disgrace and a punishment, while a leisured occupation was real joy. So, without scruple or shame, shepherds and shepherdesses abandoned themselves to innocent games: observing the stars and the birds and the weather; composing songs and stories; and making love after having sung of it. This is no academic speculation; it is what I, born of well-to-do parents, have done. It was only such children as myself, the young Rameaus, the Dissons, the Piôts, the Fouards, the Dumonts, the Béraults, the Dondènes, the Daugis, the Roards, the Minés, the Gautiers, the Champeaux, the Tilheins, etc., who watched the flocks in the summer. Children of poorer villagers, such as the Paulos, the Couchats, the Lemmes, the Blaizots, etc., were employed on rougher and more necessary labour. The truth is never to be found in published works on old time manners, for want of looking for it where it is – in villages such as mine, far removed from large towns and high roads, where rich and poor, though unequal in fortune, are equal in consideration. I leave to the imagination my scorn when I later read attempts to ridicule pastoral life. The ignorance of these eminent writers is applauded by superficial readers, neither the one nor the other having ever seen a shepherd save those of the Paris butchers.*

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*Even La Fontaine made this mistake, which he would have avoided had he been born a peasant at Sacy.

I have said that the young people met in the evening to play games together on the grassland. I had as yet no work of my own to do at home: thus I was always free between the hours of school, and entirely so during the harvest and vintage. But I had a horror of being useless; to me it was unendurable shame. During the day, I busied myself in looking after the bees and lambs and the various fowls in the yard; I pulled up the weeds in the garden and gave them to the cows. When I was tired I read Latin, which I did not understand, but loved to sing in church. I had not yet learnt to read French, and longed to do so; but it was the wise policy of my father to keep all books in this language shut away, and to read them to us in the evening after supper, when all the family was gathered together. In the evening, drawn by young cries and laughter, I used to run to the pasture-land, where I played at swinging; and at "goat," "stepmother," and "the virgin"; and, if any of the big girls were there, at "wolf" when it was too dark to see. Everyone knows what a swing is. Ours hung from an old wild apple tree, and was made of halters tied together. Girls and boys were swung in turns; but the former were at times somewhat discomfited, when scamps such as Grand-Colas were of the party and tried to put them into positions which were hardly modest. . . .

"Goat" resembles goose-shooting as it is played in Paris. Originally a goat was the prize, and the game was played during the vintage. The goat was killed with a stick hurled from fifty paces, and afterwards a feast was made upon it, whoever had dealt the mortal blow paying nothing. In my time the goat was only a stake planted in the earth, which had to be overturned by a stick thrown from fifty or sixty paces.

The Virgin was a very amusing game in dramatic form. A young girl was the virgin, and aprons and shirts or waistcoats, something from every player, were heaped upon her in a pyramid. The tower was then besieged by the boys, while the girls surrounded and defended it:

"Have Dondène gates been open thrown?
And has she got on her green gown?"
"No, no, for she has to hide,
The so much cried."
"We want her for a bride
By marriage tie!"
"No, no, for were she tied
You'ld beat her terribly!"

The skill of the game lay in the boys capturing everything that covered the virgin without being once touched by the girls. Then she belonged to them; and the girls lamented:

"Like a rose she
Soon will be shaken,
Her the bold ravisher
Presently eating
As a plum from a tree!
Pity her, pity her,
Wither shall she
Like the choquerio,
Who does the beating?"

Then they prepared to deliver her to the boys. A space was left between the two sides, and the virgin was led into the middle of it. Turning to the girls she clasped her hands in supplication:

"Do you abandon me
Thus to my misery?"
"It is your destiny:
Follow the spouse –

This we will do for you,
Weep the year through for you
Waiting the blows. . . ."

All the girls uttered cries of anguish, and one of them dishevelled the virgin's hair. The boys advanced and surrounded her. She fell upon her knees with hands uplifted, and they pretended to relent:

"Come, we guard you better shall
Than these girls in petticoats
For they are no use at all."

The virgin rose and gave her hand to the boy she liked best. He was her husband, and the game ended there. The chosen boy then politely led the girl back to her companions. It appears that this game originated in the ancient marriage ceremonies of the Gauls of the Canton, in use before and even after Christianity. It has now quite passed away with all the other games.

"Step-mother" was still more dramatic. Boys and girls gathered together, and three of the latter were selected; one was chosen for the maternal aunt, sister of the dead mother; another for the step-mother, and the third for the step-daughter. The aunt arrives from a neighbouring village. As she nears the place where the step-mother is sitting with her step-daughter, who is forced to work without raising her eyes, she enquires to right and left how her niece is treated by the step-mother. On the one side they say: *"She only gives her mouldy bread"*; and on the other: *"She gives her nothing to eat but wild apples that are half rotten."* To each remark the aunt makes answer: *"Oh, my poor niece! daughter of my poor sister, whom I loved so much!"* At last she reaches the step-mother, who assumes a gentle manner: *"Good day, sister. . . . Come, little one, leave your task, you have worked long enough."*

The step-daughter gets up; but her head has been bent so long over her work that she cannot raise it: *"Stand up, dear niece." "Alas, I cannot; my neck is bent, and will never be straight again."* The aunt turns away her head to hide the tears, and the step-mother straightens the girl with two good thumps, one in front and one behind. . . . *"Come, sister,"* continues the wicked woman, *"you have journeyed a long way, and would like something to eat. I will lay the cloth."* The step-daughter hands her the cloth; a piece of mouldy black bread is wrapped up in it, which falls to the ground. The step-mother whispers: *"Bitch, pick up your bread,"* and then aloud: *"There is no lack of bread here, we let it get mouldy."* They sit down to table, and the step-mother sets out eggs and cheese. The aunt says to her niece: *"Eat, my child."* But while she is not looking, the step-mother takes away what is on the girl's plate and gives it to her own children, who are sitting round the table. The step-daughter rises without having eaten anything; and going aside, picks up a piece of mouldy bread which she devours. *"What are you eating, child?"* asks the aunt. *"Some dainty or other that she has stolen,"* answers the step-mother quickly, *"for she is particular, and I spoil her a little."* But the aunt has seen everything, without seeming to; and she flares up as she takes the mouldy bread from her niece and shows it to the father, who has just come in. Then, weeping, she pours out the litany recited to her as she came. The father beats the step-mother and gives the step-daughter to the aunt, who takes her away and keeps her. As they go, she tells the two rows on either side of the way what she will give her: *"I will feed her on white bread, fresh eggs and cream cheese. I will dress her in fine linen, and striped Siamese calico; her petticoats shall be of flannel, her skirts of fine lawn embroidered with flowers; her corsets of strong cotton, her stockings of white wool with red clocks; her shoes shall have high heels, and her caps be of muslin with well-pleated lace."* The object of this game was to discourage widowers with grown-up children from remarrying.

The game of "wolf," always kept until it was dark, had no moral purpose, at least no obvious one. A pole was stuck into the ground, to which a long rope of halters was fastened. First a wolf was chosen (usually a coveted part), then the rope was tied to him, his eyes bandaged, and the players stood away. The boys threw their hats or caps at him; the girls their aprons and scarves, or even their camisoles and corsets. The wolf had to guess to whom hat, scarf, or apron belonged, or to throw them at the foot of the pole if he could not do so; and from there, the others had to try to get them back again. But if he guessed right, the boy detected was wolf in his turn, or, if it was a girl, she named a boy to take her place. If the wolf caught a boy, he thrashed him; if a girl, he ate her – that is to say, he tumbled her pretty freely. Hardly anyone was caught except when trying to recapture the pledges collected by the wolf. This game is quite innocent when played by children, such as I was despite my adventure with Nannette; but sometimes there would be lads of fifteen to twenty playing, and then things happened which were not too decent. Nevertheless, Monsieur Antoine Foudriat would never prohibit the game, nor even enjoin decency in the playing of it; he said that, in five hundred years, no one had ever heard of anything serious occurring, and that to forbid it would be enough to make it become criminal. . . . This wise priest died; his successor, M. Louis Jolivet, forbade the game; it became really immoral, and the civil authorities had to proscribe it. Since then there are no more games in Sacy; the people vegetate drearily, there as elsewhere; puritanism has always been humanity's greatest enemy. When I went to play wolf for the first time, we were all children together, and all was done innocently. The game gave me an indescribable pleasure. At first I was childishly afraid of being *wolf*, but having been once guessed, I so much enjoyed the part that I would have liked to play it all the time. I very quickly grew accustomed to girls by playing wolf; for that first virile act which I have described had been an effort of courage.*

In spite of all that has been related, I did not, at this age, yet understand the sweetness of a kiss. Now I will tell of the first occasion on which a young girl gave to me that exquisite sensation, of which I could say with the poet:

> *Tam tremulum crissat, tam blandum prurit, ut ipsum*
> *Mastupratorem fecerit Hippolytum.*
> Mart. ep. 203, lib. xiv.

One evening, on returning from school, I heard that two of my cousins, daughters of my paternal grandmother's sister, Mme Gautherin d'Aigremont, were in the house. Marie, the elder and a blonde, was getting married, and had come to apprise her uncle, *the upright man,* of this; and her younger sister Nannon, a brunette, had accompanied her. From what I

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*For the action in the game of *wolf,* see *Le Drame de la Vie,* Part 1, p. 19 ff. This book is the complement of the present one.

Under the old régime, it was thought to replace games by the insipid and pedantic institution of rose-queens. But these melancholy festivals are not a game; they are a source of petty cabals, petty intrigues, petty surface virtue, and of real vice. Those villages which have a rose-queen now, far from being the most innocent, are the most licentious; the vice of cities lies hidden in them, and the girls are wanton without bearing children. Why is this? It is because the ladies, who go to preside over these ridiculous celebrations, take their valets, their lovers and their vices with them. I have it from Clermont-Tonnerre, member of the constituent assembly, that his wife, having arranged for one of these festivals at Champlâtreux, a gentleman of the court gave himself the stimulating pleasure of deflowering the rose-queen two hours before her coronation. Rewards and crowns should never be given for a duty done; above all, virtue should never be crowned by vice.

remember (for I have never seen her since), Marie's face was beautiful rather in the manner of that pretty Guéant who played for only a few years in the Théâtre-Français. Nannon was just pretty: a touch of natural darkness was no disfigurement, on the contrary it made her face more attractive. She had the laughing, coaxing eyes of Aurore Marie Parizot,* of the shop where the café *Baptiste* used to be, and her *Cytherean* smile; or of the pleasing Filette, the young and pretty clock-maker three shops above the Rue d'Orléans; she was as dark as Aurore, the only difference being that my cousin was plumper. At this time I was shy to excess, and it was with an effort that I went in; but the sight of my two pretty relatives, and above all Nannon's little attentions, set me at my ease. Marie, after she had kissed me and given me some sugar almonds, handed me over to her sister, who kept me by her and paid no attention to anybody else. Not until we had become acquainted did she embrace me, and then just in a friendly way. Never had cheeks so soft touched mine; I felt a voluptuous thrill pass through my body! That kiss still lives for me; and when my imagination pictures it, I think I feel it on my cheek again. I ventured to repeat it, without my pretty cousin offering any opposition; quite otherwise, she fondled me all the more. At that time we had a servant from Nitry in the house, called Catherine Panneterat, an excellent person and quite pretty, who had sometimes protected me from the girls; she whispered to my cousin that she was indeed privileged. "I know," said Nannon, "and I like my little cousin all the better for it." I was flattered, and my young heart was flooded with a happiness which was the keener for being pure. Yet for all the pleasure I felt in Nannon's caresses, I remember that my eyes were privately attracted to the pretty foot of Marie. This little incident marked an epoch in my life, by bringing a new faculty to birth: the faculty of savouring a kiss. Ah, life is all gain at this age, and at the age I have now reached, all loss, irreparable loss! The only thing which may seem strange is that this sensation should have followed the episode in the mule stable instead of preceding it. That I was forcibly brought to this other crisis is doubtless the explanation.

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*Furrier, Rue de la C.-F.

The first time that I went back to play in the meadowland* after my cousins had left, I paid more attention to girls of my own age who had soft skins, like Nannon's. There were two who were very pretty: one was Marie Fouard; the other, Madeleine Piôt, cousin and not sister to that bright-skinned Marie who used to carry me to vespers when I was little. Marie had fine black eyes, and full well-arched brows. Everything about her announced strength and . . . temperament: she was my favourite. Madeleine had a fairer skin and was gentler, more tender and more ingenuous in her ways; she shared my heart. We began to play, and my friend Étienne Dumont was "wolf." Étienne had kept his innocence, although some foolish person had endangered it, much as Margot had endangered mine with Marie Louison; but the excellent principles implanted by his mother protected him. He was the first wolf. He was my rival with Marie Fouard, and tried to catch her. He succeeded, and behaved with her according to his nature; he did not even take a kiss, but was content just to put his arm about his sweetheart and to press her hand. Then I let myself be caught. "My friend," whispered Étienne, "I will not guess you if you do not like being wolf, although I find it a tedious business." "But I want to be," I answered, "so as to have the chance of eating up my cousin Madeleine Piôt as you have just eaten Marie Fouard." Passion made me subtle, that is to say, a liar; for it was Marie I wanted to eat up. Étienne guessed me aloud, and I was "wolf." Marie let herself be caught easily, for she liked me better than Étienne. While I was holding her, I called to mind all the voluptuous sensations I had already experienced, whether in my involuntary contact with Ursule Rameau, in the burning kisses of Nannette the reaper, or in the touch of my cousin Nannon Gautherin's soft cheeks; and I sought to renew them all with dark Marie. While feigning to devour, I embraced her and made her embrace me: *manus insertae pertractabant inguina, impuberemque concham*; the innocent child submitted to me in everything, and the desire for pleasure made itself felt. . . . Nevertheless I said to her: "Marie, my friend Étienne loves you, and so do I; which of us do you like best?" "You, Monsieur Nicolas; Étienne is only a poor little stick." And indeed he was very small, his arms were hardly thicker than my fingers. I was delighted by her answer, but I feared to wound Étienne by holding her longer; and I tried, before guessing a new "wolf," to catch Madeleine. This was easy enough; she was jealous of Marie, and was dying to be eaten up in the same fashion . . . and here, I make an observation: at this time, and later on at Courgis when my heart was seared by the eyes of Jeannette Rousseau; and even during the frenzy of my passion for Madame Parangon in the town – all my life, in fact, I have never been altogether a *monerast,* but a *polyerast*; that is, unless the reasons which I shall give later to prove that I have never loved but one woman are considered sound. "Do not be frightened, dear Madeleine," I said to the pretty Piôt as I caught her. "I am not a wicked wolf to you. I will not hurt you." I kissed her many times, instead of biting (as happened sometimes with other wolves), and treated her as I had Marie; more than this, remembering that Nannette had offered me her breasts, I sought for Madeleine's, but could not find any. . . . I let her go at last. I had now no desire to be wolf, so as Étienne had bandaged my eyes very loosely and I could see, I guessed a hat and was replaced.

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*At "wolf."

To speak honestly, I think that I loved Marie Fouard only. . . . But is it possible to love at that age? I think so; for from that time on I felt those inclinations inspired by difference in sex. The sight of Marie filled me with a secret perturbation; I had found in her that beauty which accorded with my heart. Later, indeed, I felt this appeal more strongly, but perhaps only because I was more completely formed.

Since my father had lived at la Bretonne, he had owned a vast area of enclosed meadowland, and all that was necessary to keep herds of sheep, cows and pigs; also he had a spacious run containing every kind of domestic fowl, even those which require water. Formerly he had sent his sheep up to the common pasture, but he was not the man to neglect any scheme that made for good economy, and he engaged a shepherd. Our first shepherd was named Jacques Guerreau, son of Blaise, a thatcher and husbandman (for, in Sacy, we do not follow one trade only: the Chevannes were masons and vine growers; the Cornevins, weavers and husbandmen; the Costols, husbandmen and shoemakers, etc.). This Blaise Guerreau was the most phlegmatic man I have ever met; nothing disturbed him:

Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinæ,

as good Lucretius says. Thunder or cannon would have left him unmoved, since a terrible fire which destroyed nearly all his possessions and reduced him to great poverty could not ruffle his tranquillity, or provoke a complaint. "I shall be less comfortable, neighbour," he said to my father, who had taken charge of his eldest daughter, "but what of it? A mouthful more, a mouthful less; death is always the end." One day he was told that his eldest son, a soldier and a deserter, was just going to be taken and would have his head broken. Blaise was thatching at the time; he said nothing. "But are you not going to them to plead your son's infirmity; you know that he is deaf?" "I thought of that," answered Blaise. "Go and tell them that I am old and good for nothing; they can break my head instead of his. That'll be a lesson to him, and he can finish my roof."*

His son was never caught. He was a good runner, and cleared the wall of our enclosure, leaving the ribbon of his pigtail in the hands of the sergeant charged with his arrest; then, quicker than a hare, he climbed Côte-Grêle. He was pursued on horseback, but the hill was steep and the horses were exhausted before they could come up with him. Blaise, who had not left his roof, was told what had happened. "My offer stands. Go and tell them so." This same Blaise was notably taciturn. One day he was returning from Auxerre with a man as strange as himself, who was called Marlbrough because he had served against that famous English general. As they were leaving the town, Marlbrough said to Blaise: "That is good wheat." Blaise looked at it, but was not ready with his answer. The two travellers returned to their own thoughts, and made seven leagues. At the gates of Sacy, as they were about to separate, Blaise said: "And very green." And these two were not the only people in Sacy who were taciturn to this point. . . . But we are concerned with Jacquot, Blaise's second son. He had much in common with his father, without being like him in everything. He was apathetic in the same way, but more talkative. I grew to love Jacquot for his natural goodness. I liked to be with him and used a little stratagem to enjoy his company more freely. On the eve of all feast days and of Sundays I stayed away from evening school and joined Jacquot in the meadows, arguing that, after the interval of a day, the schoolmaster would not remember. It always succeeded, but I think that Jacques Bérault was well content to show me indulgence. I can only imperfectly express the pleasure I found in ranging the countryside with shepherd Jacquot; he told me stories, and for these my appetite was insatiable. And this is a further proof that the old-time shepherds were the first to make verses and tales and narratives during their leisure; for the work of plough-boys, vine-dressers, and even threshers who make good use of their time, is too laborious to leave the fancy free and playful and inclined to the weaving of long stories; they keep these for night watches and the winter evenings. . . . Apart from Jacquot's tales, my eager and impressionable mind rejoiced in everything: a wild spot or a rugged hill; or a deep valley where the view was bounded by a wood with something fearful about it, would by that very quality fill me with a sort of inward drunkenness, which lightened to gaiety as we went up into the hills. Here I felt more buoyant, and daring took the place of fear; I would sing aloud the first *Deo Laus* that came to mind. Perhaps the enchantment was increased by the glimpse of a hare or by finding a nest, and then I was fulfilled with joy; I floated in delights. (Alas, no joy since has been so complete, so pure!) Jacquot was gentle and unselfish, and never opposed me; I, on the contrary, was lively, hot-headed, greedy and possessed by the demon of ownership; we were made to be friends. And I loved him tenderly, as we shall see.

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*Blaise was speaking seriously; such substitutions were accepted in the case of the Huguenots.

Eight days before the feast of Saint-Michel, that is to say, on the day of the equinox, September 21st, Jacquot departed secretly for Saint-Michel in Basse-Normandie, more than eighty leagues from Sacy. This was the pilgrimage of boys from fifteen to sixteen, as was that of Sainte-Reine (a matter of only fourteen leagues) for young girls. Thus both were as sacred as a pilgrimage to Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle, or one to Mecca for the Musulmans. A boy who had not been to Saint-Michel was regarded as a craven, a coward; and something was wanting in a young girl's chastity, if she had not yet visited the tomb of a virgin as wedded to her virginity as the lovely queen d'Alise. But in cases of sickness or habitual weakness, a pilgrimage to Harbeaux (or Herbeaux) took the place of that to Sainte-Reine. Observe that at Sacy lovers were forbidden to accompany their sweethearts on this pilgrimage of virgins. It took place at Whitsuntide, that is to say, six months before the wedding day; for our peasants do not marry until after the sowing, between St. Martin's Day and Advent; and formerly marriages were not celebrated in church, but at the gate called the Gate of Weddings.* In Nitry the prohibition to escort a mistress was defied, or at least evaded; for a law which opposes an agreeable occupation is always broken. The boys had an understanding among themselves, and one, as he set out, would say that he was taking Catiche or Dodette, the mistress of another; and this other would declare that he was going with the betrothed of the one who was escorting his. By this arrangement, which was sometimes imitated at Sacy, everything went on as it had before this law was instituted by Messire Nicolas Potier, who was our curé before Messire André Pinard, Messire Antoine Foudriat's predecessor.

Jacquot left the flock without a shepherd, and I begged earnestly to take his place; both from inclination, and to have some work which would

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*This gate is now walled up, and my father and mother are buried close by, as I relate in the *Paysan perverti* when speaking of Edmond's parents. May I too rest there one day, below a stone inscribed with the titles of my works.

bring me together with the village boys and girls, who watched the animals which yielded fleece or milk. My father and mother hesitated, but help was scarce and Jacquot would only be away a fortnight; also it was the best time of the year, and the time when the grazing was near at hand: so they yielded to my pleading, on condition that I should keep within the boundaries of la Bretonne, so that help should be near in case of wolves. I obeyed my instructions at first and led my flocks into the Prés-des-Rôs – or *d'Eros*, according to Antoine Foudriat, who claimed that the name signified "Fields of Love" – where I found myself alone, near the ruins of an ancient hospital, still called *Grange-à-la-Sœur.* Here I experienced two emotions for the first time: to begin with, the freedom of solitude, and this was exquisite! I communed with myself; I entered into full possession of my thoughts: the moving clouds; the note of the *œnante*, or solitary snipe, concentrated in its monotony; the little leafless flowers of autumn which sadly decked the meadows: all touched me, stirred me, made me aware of my existence in a new way. Then I found myself near a bush where Jacquot had shown me a linnet's nest two months before, and my heart melted for the absence of a friend, with whom I could think aloud. I wept. But tears were not adequate for this strong emotion. For the first time I sang words to an air improvised to express the state of my heart. All these new impulses were exquisite to me.* Insensibly I had climbed to the meadow of Grange-à-la-Sœur, and even beyond the ruined chapel of Sainte-Madeleine. There I found blackberries, of which I was passionately fond; I began to pick them, but regretted that Jacquot would not eat them with me. I sang his name aloud, I called him; and then, remembering

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*These are genuine reactions; this is nature: and not what that charlatan makes his *Élève de la Nature* do – that forger who then attributed his insipid work to J.-J. Rousseau.

a complaint of the pilgrims of St. Jacques I had heard beggars sing, I set these words to that air:

Jacquot is on pilgrimage
To Saint-Michel,
Father him in his voyage
O Raphael!
Of the mild sheep on this ridge
We were wardens;
Jacquot walks the trembling bridge
Seeking pardons.

I could only make this one verse, which I repeated over and over. How sweet were my tears! The pleasure they gave to me made them precious, and Jacquot grew the dearer for them. My heart was made for love.

On the following day I went back to Prés-des-Rôs; and, greedy for the same sensations, I ranged over the same places as the evening before, and was not disappointed. Then I climbed to la Chapelle, whence I walked to the *Grand-Pré* over against Bout-parc, with tilth of *Vaux-du-puits* on one side and, on the other, the vineyards of *Montgré,* belonging to Nitry. Here, in an absolute solitude, I acquired so completely my taste for life in wild places, that my fate would have been decided and my happiness complete had I been transported by the hair, as was Habakuk from Judea to Babylon, and clapped down in America, or in the Alps or Pyrenees, or even in the unfrequented mountains of Dauphiné. . . . I was alone, free, sole master of all my actions, removed from every eye. Only a soul capable of this joy will understand me. My awareness of the life in me was doubled, existence was enlarged, I was drunk with liberty; I cherished it, I adored it, I perceived that I loved it beyond everything. . . . Poor wretch! I knew this only to go into the towns, and crawl a slave to the vile Tools of

Despotism for the rest of my days! . . . What am I saying? I am not a slave! I have lived poor and free. . . . Where is my master? On whom do I depend for anything, now, at fifty years of age (1784)? . . . Yet I suffer grievous anxieties! The iron rod is raised against me, and I know not if it will strike. . . .*

The vintage came, and still Jacquot had not returned. The stoic Blaise told us dispassionately that he had apparently perished in a rash attempt to reach Mont Saint-Michel on foot when the tide was rising. I wept for my old comrade.

The work about my father's house had so increased that they had still to let me shepherd the flocks, though the days were getting shorter; nor did they even ask what pastures I frequented. One precaution only was taken, because of wolves: I was always accompanied by three great dogs, *Pinçard*, *Babillard* and *Friquette.* (Friquette was a treasure of fidelity and of intelligence.) Grand-Pré, for which I had taken a fondness, was my favourite pasture, and I made straight for it. The people of Nitry, always eager for enjoyment, vintaged early, so that I was at liberty to glean among the vines, comfortably, abundantly, and as though I were the owner; for the careless *Nitriates* left all kinds of fruits: grapes, peaches, pears, apples, quinces – and all of them better than the unripe harvest of the growers. There was a kind of grandeur and generosity in their unconcern; they did not harvest with precision, as at Sacy. They said: "A little must be left for the poor man who has no vines, so that he may taste the grapes; for, in the past, when there were only wild fruits, they belonged to everybody. A little grown fruit must

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*This refers to the *Paysanne perverti,* which a scoundrel tried to prevent from being put on sale. It needed all the good will of the director-general Villedeuil, and the fervent efforts of citizen Toustain-Richebourg to extricate me from this dangerous pass. The book was already printed and the plates engraved.

be left for the poor who have nothing, to keep them from theft and from despair; and to refresh the traveller, or the shepherd who comes to these lonely hills." Thus I found an abundance of fruit among the vineyards of Mont Gré; while my sheep, my pigs and my goats pastured in the Grand-Pré, or in the field of Jean Simon, the maker of witch-balls,* which was rich in wild thyme and other tender hill-grasses excellent for sheep. How I savoured my life among the high hills! Ah, what exquisite moments, and how much I have regretted them! And how much pleasure have I not had since in the mere remembering of them! The day slipped away too soon, and I returned with sorrow to my father's house. Oh, why did I not know the shepherds of the Apennines, who pass their lives in following their flocks, rendering an account of them but once a year! Alas! I did not know that my happiness lay in any one place; I judged of all the universe by my own village: *Tutto il mondo è come nostra famiglia.* Yet I behaved somewhat as do those shepherds of Italy. Arriving home by evening, I supped alone, and at daybreak again led out my flocks.

They prospered in my hands; I brought them back replete with food and, thanks to Friquette, the wolves did not diminish their numbers. This splendid guardian would sometimes alone pursue two wolves and force them to take flight. It is strange that I, who was almost pusillanimously afraid of dogs, would recklessly attack a wolf. I chased them with no other weapon than stones, and, as I was a swift runner, I harried them and tired them, and often drew blood.

*Or maker of *manses*. The man's head had been turned by religion, through the fear of hell. He had stopped attending mass, and worked among his vines on Sundays and feast days. He manufactured *manses* – small balls of clay to keep off the devil, who appeared to him in the form of a spider. This unhappy man was shut up at the end of ten years, although he had never caused any trouble. This was wrong; and my father refused to sign the petition.

Opposite to the vineyards of Mont Gré and behind the wood of Bout-Parc was a still lonelier valley into which I had never yet dared enter: the high bordering woods gave it a sombre look that frightened me. On the fourth day after the Nitry vintage, I ventured to go there with all my flocks. At the bottom of the valley were bushes for my goats, growing on the edge of a ravine, and greensward where the heifers could graze as in the Grand-Pré. Finding myself there alone, I was filled with a secret horror, caused by Jacquot's tales of the excommunicated being changed into beasts; but the horror was not wholly unpleasant. My fourfold flock grazed about; the smaller pigs found an abundance of a kind of wild carrot, and rooted in the earth; while the larger ones, their mother leading, moved towards the wood. I was following to prevent them from entering it when, under an old oak covered with acorns, I saw an enormous wild boar. I trembled with fear and delight, for his presence there added to the wildness which gave the place such charms for me. I came as near to him as I could. He saw me; but, proudly disdaining a child, continued his meal. By a lucky chance, the sow was in heat; she went to the boar, who ran at her as soon as he smelt her. I was drunk with joy at the spectacle they presented to me, and held back my three dogs so that the boar should not be disturbed. At the same moment a hare showed itself, and a roebuck; and I thought myself transported into fairyland; I hardly breathed. I gave an inarticulate cry when a wolf appeared, and was forced to loose my dogs against this common enemy; the fear that he might attack the herd destroyed the charm of his presence (for all wild animals added to this in my eyes). My dogs frightened away hare, roebuck and boar; all vanished into the wood, but the spell remained; it was even strengthened by a beautiful hoopoe coming to perch among two pear trees, of a kind the folk call honey-pears, because their fruit is so sweet and sugared that wasps and bees devour them when ripe. I knew the fruit well, for the parents of my friend Étienne Dumont had a honey-pear tree at the bottom of a field very near to my father's house, and he would sometimes take me to eat the little fallen pears. But how delicious were these, my very own, and on free ground! Add to this that they were ripe and plump, and that I owed no man for them: for the trees grew on the wild sward which bordered the ravine. . . . I looked with admiration at the hoopoe, the first I had ever seen, and ate some pears, while I filled my pockets with a feast of them for my young brothers and sisters.

An idea came into my head: "This valley belongs to nobody; I seize it, I take possession of it; it is my little kingdom. I must erect a monument such as father reads of in the Bible, to establish my right to it." I set to work immediately and, when it was finished, climbed on to it to survey my empire. For, as no one was to be seen, I considered myself master there and, by the transmutation of my vivid imagination, felt what perhaps has never been felt in Europe, the state of man before kings and laws and prohibitions. This happy day was too soon ended.

On my return home I was sad and silent: the bustle, the tumult, the subordination chafed me. My dear mother thought I was unwell, and overwhelmed me with attentions. "I am perfectly well," I said, a little brusquely, "but I would like to be a roebuck or a boar; I would not like to be a wolf; because I want to live peacefully in the woods, and above all in the valley where I was to-day." "And where were you, Nicolas?" "Beyond Bout-Parc." "Oh, so far, my child!" "I wish it were farther. . . . Oh! if you knew how lovely it is." And I was silent, for want of words. Afterwards I distributed honey-pears to my little brothers and sisters, who exclaimed upon their excellence; even my mother ate some, which increased my pride and satisfaction. During supper I felt a need to talk, and told my father that the sow had been covered by a wild boar. He seemed pleased, and himself advised me to return to my valley (as I called it).

Next day I left at dawn, my little bag of provisions – a bottle of wine and water, bread for the dogs, etc. – loaded on the two largest sheep (for as the ewes were in heat, the two rams, which generally carried the packs, had to run free). I had flint and steel to light a fire, for Jacquot often made a fire of twigs to warm up his food, or to cook birds' eggs, or the quails and larks that he caught; for he was an epicure. I imitated him, and made fires between two stones.

Furnished with all that was necessary, I joyfully sought my wild valley, and saw with ecstasy my pyramid still standing on the highest *merger*, as the frequent heaps of stones removed from our arid fields are called in the canton. I built a sort of altar against it, and it seemed a good idea to light a fire upon it, as the morning was chilly. Hardly had I made my arrangements when I saw a bird of prey, which hovered and then dropped into a thicket. I ran up; he was stripping a lark. A blow from my stick broke one of his wings just as he was taking off, and I killed him. The lark was still breathing. I had an idea. I knew about Abraham's sacrifices from the Bible, which my father read aloud every evening. King of my valley, it seemed to me that I might well be the priest also; a free being, such as I was, should be self-sufficient: king, priest and magistrate; shepherd, baker, husbandman and hunter. I regarded the bird of prey as a criminal who had troubled the peace of this abode of innocence: his death was just and I resolved to do homage to God by sacrifice. It seemed a fine idea. Noon came.

This is the hour when the draught animals are taken to pasture after work, and I heard the shepherds and shepherdesses calling. Man is born to love his kind, and in spite of my taste for solitude, I could not hear their voices without a feeling of joy: I put off my sacrifice in the hope of having a congregation, and uttered a shout which was recognised. Immediately Étienne Dumont, Edme Droin, Laurent Tilhien, Marie Fouard and Madeleine Piôt came into sight, with some other boys and girls of my own age who were guarding their ewes, or their cattle, or their draught-cows. I shouted again, and they replied. "Come here, come over here!" I cried, "to this *bonne vaux*" (a local phrase for a place which is abundant in anything). "There is fine pasture, there are honey-pears!" At this they all turned in my direction. I did the honours of my valley; it did not fill them with the same rapture, but they found it pleasant. For me it was a fairyland indeed with Marie Fouard and Madeleine Piôt there. I expounded my proprietary rights to them, displaying my pyramid and altar; such titles were sacred and my rights were recognised as inviolable by my comrades. Then I invited them to my sacrifice and they marvelled at the victims. As everything was ready, I began the ceremony. I arranged the wood in a pyre and, when the flames mounted, threw in the entrails of the bird I had prepared, for I had heard it said that so the Jewish priests threw the entrails of their victims into the fire. Then I put the body upon my altar and watched the smoke mount from my sacrifice with religious ecstasy, while I recited verses from the psalms. I was erect and very solemn, genuinely impressed by the dignity of my action. At the same time I roasted the lark on a wooden spit. When I saw that the bird of prey (a goshawk) was done, I took it from the fire, partook of it first and then shared the rest among my congregation, who did as I did. The three dogs were not forgotten; we gave them the bones and the gristly parts; the lark ended the manducation of my sacrifice. I then conducted them to *my* pear trees, to satisfy them with honey-pears and white bread. I was even able to show them *my* hoopoe, and soon after I had the joy of saying: "There is *my* wild boar," for the terrible beast came after the sow. He frightened all my friends, especially the young girls. This was my triumph, for I went quite near to the object of their fear and played the braggart to my heart's content. The boar, entirely given over to his love-making, did not disturb himself on my account. Étienne Dumont, however, even more timid than the girls, urged them to fly, and was gently herding his draught-cows towards Grand-Pré, when I detained him by telling him that I could drive away the boar whenever I chose. "Besides," I added, "I want to show you *my* roebuck and *my* hare, but you must not make any noise; and then perhaps you will see *my* wolf too. Keep quiet." They sat down on the *merger* at the foot of my pyramid, so as to keep an eye on the herds. And from here, intoxicated with ownership, I pointed out *my* bushes, *my* lawn and *my* ravine; *my* brambles covered with wild blackberries, on which we were soon gorging ourselves, for the air is keen upon the hills. To crown my glory, the hare appeared and I loosed Friquette on it, and she caught and laid it at my feet as was her wont. How proud I was! I only encountered one little mortification; neither *my* roebuck nor *my* wolf had the complacency to appear, but I was well compensated by the capture of *my* hare. Then I turned my attention to my flocks and, fearing my wolf, led them farther into virgin and therefore richer pastures which I had not yet explored. My comrades were astonished at them. At last the herds were satisfied, but the shepherds, on the contrary, were beginning to feel hungry; so we went down into the Grand-Pré to glean grapes, apples and pears from among the vineyards of Mont-Gré, which we found a veritable Promised Land. In a short time we came together again and laid an ample gleaning upon the sainfoin; I sent someone to take my second pack, which was still full, from off the big sheep, and in it we found some pickled pork; with our plentiful dessert the feast was richer than in my valley. At sunset I was led back as in triumph to my father's house.

This great day was also the last one of my happiness, at least for that year, for I found Jacquot had come back. Ah! what plans had been made against my peace since his unexpected return! I was to be boarded out again, I was told, and was broken-hearted, thinking they meant to send me back to Vermenton. Yet I was not insensible to the pleasure of seeing Jacquot again, even though he dethroned me and was the cause of a misfortune that I dreaded. I welcomed him, and begged permission to accompany him next day that I might show him my *bonne-vaux*. . . . But not without a sigh. I, the king of yesterday, sovereign master of a whole valley, with a boar, a wolf, and a roebuck for unruly subjects; who, with my satellites, had already put to death one of my most harmless subjects (so easily is supremacy abused); unchallenged owner of two fine wild pear trees and a lawn; and of bushes where linnets and goldfinches and warblers and perhaps a nightingale would nest; I had to ask for the right to return just once! It made me sick at heart. Ah! why did I not know the Apennines! Nevertheless, hardly were we upon the hill before I tasted my freedom. I told Jacquot about my valley, and I took him there. Then I gave him possession of the gleanings among the vineyards of Mont-Gré; and here Marie Fouard, with her company of the evening before, together with Étienne's sister, Fanchon Berthier, found us at noon. Jacquot was so delighted to see Fanchon, who has since become his wife, that he made us push on to Sauloup, where the fruit among the unguarded vines was so abundant that at first we were afraid they had not yet been vintaged. We loaded our larger animals with fruit and returned to my valley to gather honey-pears. And such was my friends' respect for me – the owner as they really believed, of all that was not cultivated, in virtue of my pyramid and altar – that they seriously asked permission of *Monsieur Nicolas* before taking anything of nature's bountiful provision. I granted it equally seriously, for I think I too was convinced of my rights, as the discoverer; and this is no doubt the origin of private property. . . . When each had gathered his little harvest, we began to eat. It was a delicious meal, in a peaceful spot far from the world and all constraint. . . . We spread out our provisions, which were frugal enough: three hard-boiled eggs, some cheese dried to extreme hardness, and rye-bread. Jacquot and I had a piece of an old ewe prepared as *bœuf-à-la-mode*, hard cheese, and a salt loaf kneaded with skim milk such as peasants love. But best of all, Jacquot could sling a stone as skilfully as any ancient Balearic, and while we were gleaning the Sauloup vines, he had seen thrushes among the trees and killed fourteen. He made a fire and we plucked the birds; he wrapped them in vine leaves, put them in a hole in the *merger* with stones over them, and built a great fire on top. The heated stones cooked them so perfectly that I have never tasted anything so delicious. There were two each. The boys drank my wine and water with them, as the girls did not want any. We ate with the voracious appetite of the keen-aired hills. The girls did all the work as though they had been our wives; Fanchon for Jacquot and Madeleine for Étienne; for Marie Fouard had given herself to me as queen of the valley, etc. Jacquot and his sweetheart, who were some six years older, looked on smiling at our childish loves, and at the jealousy of Étienne, who wanted Marie. "Ah!" said the pilgrim to Saint-Michel, "why aren't we all husbands and wives? For

I love you truly, Fanchon, and Étienne loves Marie. That leaves only Monsieur Nicolas; and his father will never let him marry in the village; for one day he said: 'I will send my son Nicolas to the town, for he is a good scholar, and clever I think.'" But I cried out: "I want to take a wife here, if I could have Marie!" "Oh!" said Étienne, "if you take her I shall get over it, for you are better worth having than I; and I will have Madeleine, if she will take me some day." "I will," said Madeleine. "And you, Marie?" Marie Fouard blushed without answering. "I would rather be Blaise Guerreau's boy, than M. Restif's son," exclaimed Jacquot, "for I can do as I please. You are Monsieur Nicolas, and you will pay for that *monsieur.* I am on the whole as good as any of you; but the more you are somebody, the more it costs you." "Ah!" I exclaimed (and I spoke from the heart), "how lucky are you others to be born of parents who do not want to raise you above your station! Why should I, whose only desire is to remain unknown, poor and contented in my solitude, and loving her whom I love, have parents who want to push me? All I desire is to work in the fields, and cultivate my land; it is the labours of the mind, not of the body, that frighten me." This speech disposed my comrades kindly towards me. They assured me that I was born to rise above them; only Marie Fouard, who had my welfare most at heart, seemed not to agree; but, in her, instinct prevailed over reason. Two of the wished-for marriages took place; Jacquot's with Fanchon and Étienne's with Madeleine. As for Marie, she wedded Jean Droin, who was my relative and chosen for that reason; for the dear girl always loved me; and perhaps I spoiled her happiness. . . . In the evening we all returned together. I went sadly to bed, and rose next day still more sadly to go to school. Such was the end of my first shepherding.

But here I must insert something which I omitted so as not to mix quite other matters with my sheep. . . . I had learnt to read French since my return from Vermenton. I always took a Latin-French psalter with me to the fields or into the garden near my bees, and also another book in French only, which had been given to me: the frothy *Méditations* of some monk, Pierre P. Buzée, was his name, I believe. There were seven children by the second marriage (the same number as by the first): Nicolas-Edme (myself), Marie-Geneviève, Catherine, Baptiste, Charles, Elisabeth and, last of all, Pierre who, with no taste for the country, was yet one day to succeed my father. All the children were put under my charge, in the enclosed meadow during the summer, where they were safe on the grass, and, for winter, in some warm, clean place such as the sheep stable. Then I was like a king, as in my valley: to exercise authority is a twofold, a hundredfold existence. Every moment was occupied. I made the two eldest read Latin. Then, as Margot would not show me how to read French, I resorted to strategy. My mother had given me a *Vie de Jésus-Christ* in quarto, with wide margins in which were the Latin verses corresponding to the text. Two sticks put into the wall served as a lectern, from which to intone the verses in the manner of Epistles. When Margot was listening to me one day, I challenged her to read a page in French as well as I read it in Latin; she did not see through the trick and read aloud. I followed with my eyes and my excellent memory retained it word for word. When my sister, who was my senior by seven years, had gone, I went back to the page and deciphered it, not without wonder. Then I found a way to get hold of my father's Bible: I knew all the historical parts by heart, and read it fluently. Thus I could now read French. But this does not complete the tale of my amusements.

At the beginning of my Psalter, I found a Latin-French ordinary of the

Mass. One Sunday when Jacquot had stayed at home with us, because two of the children were ill, I said I would be the curé. Jacquot offered to give the responses. I put my white shirt over my clothes, a table served for altar, and all the ceremonies, which we knew by heart, were observed. The children were in an ecstasy of joy when I made them come up to the offertory, and afterwards administered the communion with salt bread, cut into thin rounds; the only subject of dispute was about the size of their "wafer." At dinner the children told how they had been to Mass and I had celebrated, and how they had all said their prayers. They were well-behaved and decorous. No one was paying much attention to them, until an elder sister, Madeleine, made them explain. She was about to reprove me, but I saw my father sign her to silence. In the evening we said Vespers; I made myself a paper stole, etc. I was tasting all the sweetness of a religion made for oneself, the only kind which comes from the heart. I arranged a chapel or wayside altar; my younger sisters gave me their dolls, which had come from Paris; and I made statues out of them, and fetishes which we adorned. But how to represent God? I consulted Jacquot, who answered laconically: "I've never seen him." I pondered, and thought this out: God is eternal; like a wheel or a ball, apparently, for a wheel or a ball turns without end. . . . I concluded that this must be the symbol of Divinity, so I chose a largish round stone which I placed in the centre of my chapel as the simulacrum of God. I explained to my brothers and sisters that God was infinitely bigger, and my demonstration of this astounds me even now. "You see the Sun?" I said. "That is God's right eye. You see the Moon, which will shine to-night and is so far away from the Sun? That is his left eye. How huge then is God's face? And as for the stars, they are the eyes of Saints and Angels." Jacquot was wrapt in admiration and swore that he had never

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heard anything so beautiful about God, and asked me where I had found it, seeing that I had only just begun to read French. "Nowhere; it came out of my head." And it was after this physical proof (according to me) of God's greatness that my reputation for intelligence began to spread, not only in Sacy, but through the neighbouring districts, carried abroad by the peasants who came every Sunday to submit their little differences to the arbitrament of my father. For Edme Restif, simple deputy bailiff to a petty court of justice, had, by his probity and excellent reputation, become Justice of the Peace for the whole district to a distance of six or seven leagues round, excepting only Vermenton and Joux, which were inhabited by townsfolk who had their own lawyers, and did not consider common sense adequate to their big disputes; and I suppose they were right. . . . My step-brothers and sisters, and even my parents were surprised by my reputation for knowledge before I had learnt to read French. I had learnt easily; but to begin reading one's native tongue when nearly eleven is hardly precocious. I had found out how to get hold of the Bible, and devoured it with the help of my excellent memory, which made everything my father had read and commented upon intelligible. By the end of my first shepherding I had read *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Judges, the Book of Ruth, Kings* and *Chronicles.* Afterwards I would go down to the threshers and tell them, or rather recite, all the historical narratives in the Bible. Then I passed for a prodigy. Good wives rose as I went by and called me *Monsieur Nicolas.* They sang my praises to my father, but he only listened to what they said as to the talk of ignorant peasants, astonished by some trifling flashes thrown off by memory.

Having read the Bible to the end of Revelations, I asked for the Lives of the Saints. I read the lives of the martyrs with enthusiasm, but the other saints left me unmoved; I was not old enough to be attracted by the virtues of peace.

My mother had a book which I had long desired, because I had heard my grandfather, Nicolas Ferlet, read a passage from it: it was the *Bon Pasteur* of Jean de Palafoix, Bishop of Osma. I asked for it one day, with tears in my eyes. I had been sitting in the garden, up among the branches of an old apple tree, to read my Latin-French psalter undisturbed; for it seemed to me that by putting myself out of reach, I made myself independent. On opening the book, my eyes fell upon the psalm *Super flumina Babylonis*; and I read it in French for the first time. My heart was moved by this elegy, and I re-read it twice, finding it different in form from the others. Then I climbed down from the tree quickly to look for my mother. "Mamma," I said, "I have found a beautiful psalm; shall I read it to you?" "But if you read it, my child, I should not understand the Latin." "But I will read it in French." "Can you read French then?" "Oh, yes, Mamma, and that is why I want you to let me have the *Bon Pasteur*, which is so beautiful." "Let us see how you read first." I read: *By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept, yea we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* There were tears in Barbe Ferlet's eyes. "You read well, my child, very well." "I learnt all alone, mamma, in the Life of Jesus, the one with the pretty curly letters. . . . You promised to give me the *Bon Pasteur* when I could read, and while I was waiting for your gilded book" (another Life of Christ bound in red morocco with gilt edges), "which I am to have when I really know a lot." My mother gave me the *Bon Pasteur*. "Do not spoil it, my child, for I have had it ever since I was quite little and it was given to me by my poor dead mother." Trembling with joy, I took the book and, to escape interruption, sought isolation on a wild apple tree in Près-des-Rôs. I was rapt in an exquisite illusion, and this was renewed every time that I re-read the book during my childhood.

My curiosity was still to satisfy on two books: one was the *Book of Carols* from which my father sang to us in the evenings during Advent; I wanted to look at it for myself as he missed out a great many which I would very much have liked to know. The other was the *Bibliothèque Bleue.* To incite us to read, my father used wisely to relate some of the marvels from these tales, such as *Jean-de-Paris, Robert-le-Diable,* and above all, *Fortunatus* with his little cap, which seemed to me the most wonderful of all. Imagine me listening to him, with eyes fixed on his lips, my mouth half open, motionless save for an occasional shiver of delight. My greed for stories used to make me stay up, after my father was in bed, to hear tales of robbers and ghosts, which made so deep an impression on me that I dared not go alone even as far as my bed. These stories upset my digestion and I had dreams after them, or rather fearful visions.

But they were not the only things which disturbed my whole mechanism. Other stories affected my body as strongly. Such were the tales of curious diseases, which my half-brother Boujat, student in surgery, delighted to tell when he came to stay with us. I listened with avidity; but if he spoke of a ruptured blood vessel, or simply of a hæmorrhage, or described some revolting illness, I used to faint. At first no one guessed the cause, but Boujat, who was a good enough observer, tried an experiment while taking precautions to revive me, and thus was able to reassure my terrified parents. I simply could not see blood without losing consciousness; and yet

I often saw animals killed – even pigs, whose death is the most frightful of all. Unlike the fashion queens of Paris, I was only humane to such excess for creatures of my own kind; a blow upon a sensitive spot, or my own or another's blood made me swoon. But that is not uncommon; what I want to emphasise is the unusual effect that words had upon me in themselves, and above all previous to instruction or reflection. Imagine what power an exhortation or seditious speech would have upon a nation made up of persons like myself; and what havoc would have been wrought in me, from the age of thirteen, or from sixteen (when I went to live in the town) to twenty-one by libidinous works, the titles of which I will refrain from mentioning here!

Reader! it is with reference to this physical constitution that you must judge me when later on you see me unable to oppose my passions. My parents, who had thought of making me a doctor, were obliged to change their plans. Nor was I better suited for the priesthood; and besides two of my brothers were already priests. They could not think what to put me to. . . . I had already found what I wanted: to be a farmer.

My mother must have spoken to my father about my reading, for he made me take the Bible after supper, and I read the first chapter of Genesis. I asked my father afterwards why there were no more sacrifices. He replied that we had the sacrifice of bread and wine. "Oh! I prefer animals!" "Apparently you would like to be a butcher. The first civilised people, namely the Indians, had such a horror of blood that, when they left their warm climate and were obliged to eat flesh, they did not want every man to do the killing, and so made of it a religious rite which devolved upon the priest; also they decreed that the blood of animals slaughtered for human food was to be offered up to God, the one sovereign arbiter of life and death." My father added some excellent remarks about arbitrary sacrifice, a degenerate form of the original, and regarded as in itself an act of homage to the Divinity. "It is only suited to rude peoples; blood and pain do no honour to the Source of life; the animals are innocent; their sufferings and their destruction are rather an outrage than a homage to their Creator." I understood most of what he said. Yet when the horses, returning to their stable, crushed a hen one day, I suggested to Jacquot that we might offer it in sacrifice. Next day, Sunday, during High Mass, which we could not attend, I announced the ceremony to my little brothers and sisters, who were crying because they could not go to church, and they dried their eyes. When everybody had left the house, I made preparations for my sacrifice. A large stone rolled near the window of my chapel served for altar, and the wood and the victim, prepared by Jacquot, were laid upon it. I solemnly prophesied that, at the Elevation of the Host, fire would descend upon the altar and consume the victim. And I read the passage about Elijah's sacrifice. I prepared holy water, and then we walked in procession round the field behind the garden where the chapel was, bearing our ark, a pretty box decorated with ribbons. Each of us carried an image, but the round stone which was God's image remained in its place. After the procession I said Mass as far as the Consecration. This was the moment when fire from heaven was to descend upon the wood, which was just a few twigs. Jacquot, who wanted to have a share in the miracle, had gone out of sight so that he could strike his flint; he lighted his sulphured stick and, while I was reading the Prayer of Elijah the Tishbite, he adroitly set fire to the twigs from his hiding place behind the rock. I saw the dexterous movement, but any priest will trick or profit by another's trickery; my little congregation believed in the miracle, and I enjoyed its respect. How devout they were! In church they played or chattered or shouted; here they all prayed or maintained a deep and reverent silence. What an advantage the founders of religions had over their successors! They alone could arouse enthusiasm; those who came after spoke to cold, dulled ears. Then Jacquot thoroughly cooked the fowl and we ate it for lunch. . . . From that day my delight was to be called Abraham by my younger brothers and sisters; my father was Terah, and the younger ones sometimes called him this to his face; he smiled at it, thinking that, as I was always reading the Bible to them, they remembered the names.

Every talent, every quality is a natural gift; instruction may facilitate and inform their use, but it cannot impart them. I have told how I tended my sheep, but it was the lambs which most absorbed my attention, and I managed to preserve them from the mortality caused by cold and neglect, too common among these little creatures. Something which I had heard said to Pierre Guerreau, elder brother of Jacquot, gave me a hint: I chopped up hay and straw, and mixed these with bran, and this food strengthened the lambs and suckling ewes. In 1745 not one of my lambs died. But I also turned my attention to the bees. Every winter at least half of our hives and nearly all the swarms perished; so that it was impossible to repair the loss of old hives. I examined the causes of this wastage, and found that it was due in part to field-mice, but still more to the cold. I made traps to destroy the mice; then plastered the hives with lime and cow-dung and covered them with excellent coats of long rye-straw. I did more: I cooked lentils and, on fine winter days when bees desert the hives, I used to moisten these with urine, and spread them on the stones, and this farinaceous bean sustained them and preserved them from diarrhœa. During the two years that I looked after the lambs and hives, not one was lost. I saved all the hives from the preceding summer, even the most unpromising, and the little abortions born of the weakest ewes. My parents and the servants were astonished by my talent for small economies, but it did not produce the result I had expected: on the contrary, my father became more and more determined to send me to the town, after he had had me taught the elements of Latin by my elder brothers.

During the summer of 1745, I more than once proved my gift for preserving stock in the poultry yard. During my leisure . . . (at this time my chief occupation was reading, and I was learning to scribble with incredible zeal. For I was ashamed that a boy of my age should not yet be able to sign his own name, and made quicker progress because of this thought than through all Maître Jacques's lessons: the love of glory is a fine thing, and a powerful incentive! but not everyone has it. . . . It was just this excessive desire to write which prevented me from ever having a good hand; I could never force myself to trace large, isolated letters devoid of meaning; I wanted to write at once, and to copy out books. I was threatened with the whip, which I feared more than anyone, but vanity triumphed; I always scribbled like a man, and never wrote as a child. The master was obliged to give way to me, and my parents approved this indulgence, intending soon to put me under someone who could control me). . . . But to return to my talents.

Although my mother was very clever and painstaking, she found it difficult to rear water birds; and with turkey-poults she had had no success. With unwearying care I overcame all obstacles. I had little trouble with the ducks and geese; I made a small pond in the yard, with a sluice so that it could be cleaned daily; every evening I filled it from the well, and by the next day the water was sufficiently aerated. I knew that young turkeys should not get wet, and protected them from rain and cold. I was successful, and my mother was delighted. But this very success caused me some unpleasantness; for my father, to whom she spoke of it in my hearing, told her that so great an aptitude for little things was a bad augury, and that I must be given a distaste for such work; at the same time he advised my elder sisters to make fun of me, and to insult me with the nickname of *henwife*. I overheard all this up in my apple tree, and blushed painfully. But my mind was soon distracted from disagreeable thoughts: my father and mother returned to the house, and a hive swarmed. To take a swarm was at this time my chief delight, and I tasted it to the full; for I put this one into a hive that had been prepared with no help save from my twin sisters, who shook the branch. Afterwards I went in pride to tell the news to my father who, heretofore, had been the only one to do this. He seemed somewhat surprised when I told him that I had put the swarm into the hive. Then I looked at my mother: "That is a man's work, is it not, Mamma?" "Yes, my son," she answered with a smile, understanding that I had overheard the conversation in the garden.

But now a new order was to begin. The day after the one on which I had taken Jacquot to my valley and passed delightful hours there with my comrades and my first sweetheart, my father woke me early: "Nicolas! Nicolas!" I thought: "It is to go to school in Sacy," and my heart contracted. "Yes, Father." "We are going to Joux to see your sister Marianne and your brother-in-law Marsigny; and we will take the opportunity to pay a little visit to M. Christophe Berthier, the son of worthy M. Berthier of Nitry." When he had left us, my mother explained the matter, putting it to me that I must be educated, and that at Joux I should be near my sister, which would make it like home. I was inclined to listen favourably for a singular reason: I did not hate Joux as I did Vermenton, for the former lies to the east of our village, and I had an inborn horror of the west, without doubt because the setting of the sun is opposed to its rising, which rejoices all nature. So I went with my father, and he beguiled the way with impressive quotations from the teachings of the master who had instructed him as a boy, the which I have related in his *Life*. He added that I was to be under the son of this man. . . . I have always admired since my father's power of apt narrative. . . . At Joux we dined with my sister, and did not see the schoolmaster until it was time for the evening lesson. The son of Christophe Berthier welcomed my father with every evidence of friendship; but I found something of severity in his manner of looking at me, whereas his wife (the same who brought that violent punishment upon my father, described in the first volume of his Life, which has scandalised so many white-livered parents) inspired immediate confidence with her kindly ways; in her I seemed to see my dear Aunt Madelon. Christophe Berthier of Joux had two grown-up daughters of twenty-five and twenty: Joson, the elder, was the image of her mother; Nannette, the second, was much prettier; but she was haughty, disdainful even; she had in perfection the noble caste of the Berthiers, which might have passed for Roman but for the extreme whiteness of their skins. My first impulse was towards Nannette, but she soon ceased to be agreeable to me, for she talked of nothing but one Barbier of Noyers, a grown-up boarder then on holiday. I was now eleven years old, all but a month or six weeks; and my physical development and, still more, my air of gravity and reserve, gave an impression of maturity. Up to a late age, I had had that weakness which parted Madame la Présidente de Mesmes from her husband; but for a long time now no accident had happened to me in my father's house. Therefore it was with a painful astonishment that, on the third night of my stay at Joux, I noticed that I had had a relapse. What shame for a boy of my age, living in a house where there were pretty grown-up girls! I did my best to dry the place, but in vain; wool is difficult to dry. Also I had an excellent mattress, which I cursed a thousand times; I would much have preferred a straw one. On rising I put it near to the window, which I opened. But (and this will surprise Parisians) I slept in the same room with the two grown-up girls; the room on the first floor, which is called in the country the *high room*; their parents slept on the ground floor. After I had gone down to my class, I watched out of the corner of my eye for Nannette to go upstairs to make the beds; I hoped that mine would dry if she waited until midday. And this happened; but she noticed something. However she was so far from suspecting the truth that, as we were going to bed in the evening, she said to me: "Monsieur Nicolas! be careful when you use the chamber." Then she laughed a good deal and whispered to her sister. I determined to be impeccable. I hardly slept; but it is well known that *minctio lecti* is merely one symptom of a general debility and the vigil only aggravated this condition in myself, thus adding to the cause of the trouble. Ten times I used the chamber without any particular need, and yet the dreaded accident took place! But it was a slight matter. The fulfilment of my shame was reserved for the morning, when I slept the more deeply for having kept myself awake through the night. My needs produced a dream in which I thought I was holding the chamber. I woke in the middle of an evacuation. I was appalled! I knew that there was no way of escape (it was then already day) and that my shame would be discovered. And it was. Nannette, who already had suspicions, made the beds early. She found the sheets still wet, and the mattress too. She burst in upon her mother with the news. Her father, and all the boys who were then in class, heard her. I was confounded. From that unhappy day, Nannette overwhelmed me with scorn: she spoke to me as to a detestable child, and is the only woman who has made me understand that it is possible to hate beauty. Even now, I burst out laughing when I think of a beautiful girl of eighteen taking a great booby, almost as tall as herself, to the door, to make him do his little business before going to bed, and watching closely to see that he did not trick her. Such were the artless manners of Morvand, of which Joux is the frontier. Nannette also complained to my sister, who said: "He must be ill, for he never did it at home, nor at Vermenton, where he was boarding this summer." Still she spoke seriously to me about it, but of what use was that? The very fear of this impropriety made it happen the more frequently. I could never have checked this childish failing, had it not led to one of the adventures which marks an epoch in my life.

Barbier, the student boarder so vaunted by Nannette, arrived at last. He was to share the big bed in which I slept. After the first greetings, Nannette's most urgent news was that he had to sleep with a *pissabed*. Barbier looked at me in astonishment: "You don't mean it!" (I can see him still.) "Good heavens! we must see about this." I blushed, and lowered my eyes; all appetite had left me; I could not eat any dinner. I had disliked this big Barbier before his arrival; now I feared him. After dinner he went into the class-room and began to talk to the demoiselles Garnier, daughters of the bailiff, and the demoiselles Barbier; and with Mlle Mouchou, a wealthy girl who had formerly shown me much kindness. Tears were in my eyes, and Julie Barbier asked me what was the matter. My fellow-pupil hastened to explain: "He wets his bed." A great burst of laughter came from every side. I longed for power to obliterate myself. I, who played the grown-up! I, the oracle of Sacy! I, already a father, to be flouted at Joux for an infantile weakness! Mlle Julie Barbier, who was in no way related to my fellow-pupil, had a gentle and sensitive heart, and even at that time had read romances. She came to me and dried my tears with her white handkerchief, and explained that it was but a passing weakness and in no way derogatory. She scolded Barbier: "How unkind you are! You can see perfectly well that the fault is involuntary and that he suffers more for it than you. Do not be distressed, Monsieur Nicolas! It is not a sin. Such little failings as yours, which, to me, only make you more interesting, are more quickly and more surely cured than those of Monsieur" (pointing to Barbier). "You read well, you calculate easily, and" (she added in a whisper) "to know just what this person who treats you so rudely is worth, you have only to listen to him!" These last words mitigated my suffering; I thanked my kind friend, and managed to smile. She patted me on the cheek with her soft hand, and I was almost happy. Then the master entered and everyone settled to work.

Barbier read first. He stumbled. Julie, who was beside me at the writing table, jogged me with her elbow at each badly read word. Then came my turn to read from my Gothic parchment: I went quickly and without stumbling; but in the manner of Sacy, prescribed by Monsieur Antoine Foudriat: that is, I said: *ils étaient, ils achetaient* like everybody else; which surprised the other scholars who would have read *ils estoient, ils acheptoient.* But the master said nothing to me and I went back proudly to my place. Barbier looked at me in stupid wonder, and from that moment I felt myself so far superior to him, in spite of my infirmity, that he could never afterwards make me feel ashamed. Julie read next, and I was surprised to hear a different pronunciation from the one she used when speaking: she gave the sound of the word *rois* to the last syllable of *j'adorois* – as the routine worshippers will persist in writing it. Christophe Berthier noticed my surprise, and said: "In the past, Nicolas, everyone pronounced words as we still read them in my class; I prefer letting my pupils read as we no longer speak, to confusing them with contradictory rules. The important thing is to learn to read on sound and simple principles, for whatever is contrary to common usage is quickly corrected by contact with the world. And even if it is not, and a man reads his prayers and title deeds as he has learnt to read here, what harm will it do him? It is better to save my pupils trouble, than to emphasise an inconsistency in our orthography in order to give them a useless perfection. Read as you are accustomed; those who want to imitate you may do so, but I will not make it a rule." Even to-day I am astonished by such right thinking in a country schoolmaster.

We then did sums upon paper and with counters, after the manner of the Romans who counted with their letters. I had never used counters and hardly knew the value of ordinary figures, but I understood counters at my first attempt and did my first addition in the same lesson; Barbier after six months could do neither the one nor the other. Then we wrote, and if all my schoolfellows, excepting Barbier, formed their letters more correctly, I surpassed them all in spelling. My intelligence was prodigious compared with that of my fellow-pupil, for the brain of that stalwart lad seemed as it were obscured by a too luxuriant overgrowth.

My quickness to learn and my extreme sensibility endeared me to Julie. She realised the latter quality when she read me some passages from a devotional romance, by a certain Père Ange, a Capuchin, and I was moved to tears. Then she told me about another novel, praising it as a masterpiece. She brought it to me. It was *Polexandre.* She read parts of it aloud, for she could not leave it with me, and was surprised to find that what had always bored her schoolfellows, particularly Barbier and Nannette Berthier, threw me into such an ecstasy of delight that I left everything, forgot everything, in order to listen for whole hours when the master was absent. When we were thoroughly well acquainted, she said to me one day: "Monsieur Nicolas, I spoke about you to my dear father, and told him how you think, how you learn, and how you reason. 'My child,' he said, 'that boy will never want, although his father is not rich and there are many children in his house.' Ah! Monsieur Nicolas, how I wish I had a brother like you." This young girl was just as sweet as she was intelligent.

In spite of Julie's kindness, I was very unhappy at Joux, because of Nannette and my nocturnal indisposition. But I did not mope as I did at Vermenton, and later in Paris with my brother, the abbé Thomas. There were two things which made life in Joux bearable, the first and most important being Julie's companionship. The second was that Joux lay to the east of my village, which will appear a trifle; yet it prevailed over other grounds for acquiescence, and worked continually upon me, preserving me from that nostalgia which sometimes drives the Swiss back to their mountains from the other end of France or Italy. Julie was nearly fifteen, already mature and very pretty; she read well, and with grace and feeling; she wrote correctly, because she was fond of reading; she came to school, less for her own sake than to be with her brothers and sisters, and her wise supervision of them was found admirable by all. She learnt music from her father, a very cultivated man, and there was no one in the town who did not love her for her benevolence. Nearly every day she brought me either jam or cake or fruit, and forced me to take them, saying: "I hear from Joson that you eat hardly anything at table. You are too shy, I think. Take care, dear Nicolas, for sometimes one pays in health later on for false pride in youth, or so my dear father says." One day, when the older pupils had not yet come and we were alone together at the writing-table, she said to me smiling: "You were ashamed of what you were so rudely taxed with in front of us all? And yet it is just the very thing which has brought us together; for if this slight defect had not made you seem a child, could a girl of my age have become familiar with you, as I have done?" I saw that she was right, and was almost glad of my misfortune. Yet I was not in love with Julie; to me she was an angelic creature, who did not trouble me or rouse desire; I loved her as a friend, not as a girl. She often wanted to take me home to dinner with her parents, who doubtless had given their consent; she asked the master's permission, and this was granted, but I was too shy to accept. I, to dine in town? It was as much as I could do at forty-four years of age.

However, the less I feared it, the less my infirmity troubled me; and the last time it appeared it led to an incident, strange and extravagant enough to be worthy of *The Nights of Straparola.*

Barbier complained bitterly about sleeping with me, though the bed was large enough for me to do my worst and not inconvenience him. He talked so much about it that finally Joson, who was goodness itself, agreed to make up a separate bed for me. "No," said Barbier, "let the *dandelion* stay where he is. I will have the separate bed." "Then my mother and father must know nothing about it," whispered Nannette. "Very well, they shall not," answered Joson. "But," said Nannette, speaking with the careless displeasure that so well became her, "what a nuisance this . . . what was it you called him, Monsieur Barbier?" (and she laughed loudly). "Dandelion," he replied. "What a nuisance this dandelion is! If I told my father how things really are he would be whipped." "Ah," I thought, "how kind she is after all! So she did not tell all that she might have told!" The next evening, Joson and Nannette made up a bed for Barbier on a long table, hedged in by chairs; I was left with the palliasse, one sheet and a blanket. I was not dissatisfied; from the moment that there was no bed to spoil, I had nothing to fear and was never incontinent again. So everybody was pleased except Joson, who feared that I was not. When she thought me already asleep because I pretended to snore, she said to her sister: "I would rather have a bed ruined than see a delicate young man so uncomfortable. It is obvious that he is unhappy here, for he eats hardly anything, and that makes me wretched." "Oh, it's good enough for him," answered Nannette, "and he is not moping; his Julie Barbier sees to that; and, as for not eating, I might worry about that if I did not see him munching sweetmeats with her all day. I am glad she knows he is a *pissabed*, a dandelion." And she burst out laughing. "Yes," said my friend, "she knows, and it only makes her kinder to him." "Oh, that is just like her!" answered Nannette. "She is always the comforter of the unfortunate!" "He has a sweet disposition, sister," said Joson, "and that is why people like him. I like him very much too, and Monsieur Lemoine" (of Oudun, her future husband, who had come twice to the house since I had been there) "says he is full of intelligence." "He!" exclaimed Nannette. "Then he must have left it all behind at the *Puits-Babillard** when he came to Joux. He is always so sheepish with us, and talks to no one but his mawkish Julie." "Bashfulness is a sign of intelligence," replied Joson, "you have often heard my father say so, and that boldness nearly always goes with

*A little fountain, doubtless so named from the babble of the women who did their washing there.

stupidity. My eldest brother, who is now at Noyers, was timid in just the same way, and he is a clever man; whereas the younger one, at Vezelay, has not half his intelligence, and you know how far from shy he was."

They were talking out loud, thinking that their father and mother were asleep; but it seems that Maître Berthier, who had only the one bedroom for his boarders and his daughters, had not entire confidence in the innocence of the golden age. He had entered the room softly and, hearing Barbier's voice from very near to his daughters' bed, imagined that he was sleeping with them. And it would not have been the first time in those parts that a big boy slept in the same bed with big girls without ill-consequence, but never after they had lived in large towns! Also it would seem that a certain instinct informs even the blindest parents in this matter; for should a son return after he has once left his father's house, he no longer sleeps with his sisters. This would be to treat him with contempt, and as a child. As I was saying, M. Christophe Berthier imagined that Barbier was in bed with his daughters, on the pretext that, as the two sisters were together, there could be no harm in it. Under this impression he went quietly up to the bed, and, when he knew by touch that he had reached it, began to grope about for the fellow. Nannette, feeling a hand straying over her, thought it was her dear friend Barbier. "What are you thinking of?" she whispered. "Go away, or my sister will hear you." The father did not know what to make of these words, but I think now that he must have put the worst construction on them, with the result that he smacked his youngest daughter on the face without uttering a single word. Nannette screamed. Joson screamed because her sister screamed. Barbier tried to jump out of bed, thinking it was a thief; upset the table and chairs, and himself fell into the middle of the room under Christophe Berthier's feet. The latter, surprised by the uproar and finding the supposed sinner within reach, leathered him with his tawes – a weapon he always carried, much as a nobleman his sword or an Italian his dagger. The two girls shrieked: "Thieves!" and shouted for their father; Barbier, who was strong, pommelled the master, though he had recognised him by his weapon. Madame Berthier came upstairs, carrying a lamp, and all the disorder was disclosed: mattresses and a feather bed on the floor, Barbier and the master fighting, the latter underneath and laying about him with his tawes; the girls sitting up half-naked and trembling, and myself lying on the palliasse, wrapped in a sheet and a blanket, pretending to have just woken up. Little by little everything was explained. Christophe questioned me; I replied ingenuously, and he had the good sense to assure me that, if this nocturnal accident befell me at times, he understood that it was unintentional and would not hold it for a crime. Our bed was remade on the spot, and Barbier lay down at my side. Freed from my fears, I never again gave occasion for complaint.

Eight days after came the vintage, which always begins late at Joux. It rained, and I was soaked. I took cold and, with it, a fever. I had never had this illness, and was with Julie Barbier when the second paroxysm overtook me. . . . Reader, listen carefully to what happened.

I was shivering, and she felt my pulse. "Gracious heavens, have you got fever?" asked my kind friend. "You must go to bed and drink as much as you can. I would like to look after you myself, but Madame Berthier is kind and will take good care of you." I would not go to bed, for, though constitutionally delicate, I had endurance. . . . No, I can find no words to express Julie's kindness. She went to find me something to drink and, taking advantage of the master's absence, hurried to her father's house and returned with an agreeable syrup – of violets, I think – and with its help I drank as much as she wanted me to. With what compassion she soothed me; and in Julie, all this had no origin other than in her own most excellent disposition. She embraced me, and even kissed my hands. We know already how easily my senses could be stirred, and my adventure with Nannette had developed a sixth sense, exquisite in youth. Burning with fever and drunken with her caresses, I felt the prick of desire, and sought satisfaction in accordance with my memories. Mlle Barbier made not the slightest resistance. She gave herself . . . so tenderly compliant that her reading must have opened both her heart and senses. As for me, vehemently excited by the caresses of a charming and devoted girl, I transcended nature by organic tension. I triumphed . . . but how dearly I paid for this chance exaggeration of my strength! I nearly died. As for Julie, she was older than myself, in good health, and she was a woman; and despite the pain of defloration, which had drawn a cry from her, she avowed that she had tasted all the joys of love. She was infinitely tender with me afterwards, but I was as dead in her arms. Ah, how delicately she cherished me! Gradually she brought me to myself with her kisses, and a little cordial. Happily she had plenty of time, for none of the pupils appeared that afternoon and she had left her younger brothers and sisters at home. The master's daughters had gone with their mother and Barbier to make raisin wine at the house of a Mme Delétang. . . . What an evening! It is one of the most extraordinary episodes in my life. Although I was so fond of Julie (who, without knowing it, I had made a mother) yet I felt that it was not as a lover that I loved her, but (as later with Thérèse, her daughter) in purest, tenderest friendship. . . . My extreme exhaustion poisoned this second enjoyment as it had my first with Nannette. And, curiously enough, it was I who was embarrassed and ashamed next day, and Julie who came out to meet me and reassure me. . . . I was two days without fever, but a new and much more violent attack overtook me on the third. Julie was doubly attentive to me; but there was no recrudescence of erethism on my side, and I was all the more grateful for my friend's ministrations. . . . Yet who would believe that I, who so loved her, I, who was so touched by all her care for me as often to shed tears of happiness – who would believe that I never saw her again? Oh, amiable and generous girl, who would believe that for nearly twenty years I forgot you, although you lived no more than a league from Sacy, and kept yourself informed about me! O Julie, if you are still alive, accept the homage of my gratitude and of my tears! Ah!

> *Ingratis Jupiter non dedit esse beatis.**
>
> Hor.

Yet happy the benefactor when ingrates do not turn the benefit to a cause for scorn, as do so many men towards so many women! . . .

> *Est aliqua ingrato exprobrare voluptas.*†

Yet perhaps excuses will be found for me in the events which were to follow.

I was so weak the next day that I could not stand upright, and asked to be sent back to my parents; but I was not allowed to go. I told my Julie, but she only gently shook her head. By and by she said: "Wait a little." On the next day I had no fever, and Julie seemed satisfied; but on the third, an attack of shivering announced a terrible paroxysm. Julie was by my side when it began. "How white you are!" she exclaimed. "Yes, I feel the fever coming on at a gallop." "Ah, how I wish your home were farther off, or at least that you had no sister here. Then I could take you home and nurse you as I nursed my father, who said that no one had ever tended him as well as his Julie. But you have a sister, and your home is close by. Take my advice and go home; illness cannot be treated among strangers, however kind; if they do not worry you, you feel that you are a worry to them. It costs me something to give you this advice, and I think you understand me well enough not to doubt it." I was agitated by my fever and Julie's kindness; I kissed her hand. The tears came into her eyes: "Dear God, how I wish you were from Paris or from Dijon, little friend!" "Goodbye, Mademoiselle" (I did not think it was for ever), "I am going home." "Not to-day, with the fever upon you?" "It is not an hour's walk from here, and I shall be home before the hot spell is upon me." She gave me two oranges, the only ones perhaps in the countryside and the first that I had ever seen, and told me to perfume my mouth with them after drinking at springs. "Goodbye, Mademoiselle Julie." She made no reply, but sobbed, with her hands upon my shoulders.

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*Jupiter never allows the ungrateful to be happy.

†Although it is a pleasure to reproach the ingrate with his ingratitude. Ep. xii. v. 12.

I left the class-room without speaking to the master. At the door into the street I turned round; Julie had run to it, and was overcome with emotion as she waved goodbye. At last I could see her no longer; I went to my sister and told her that I wanted to go home. My fever was so violent, that she got everything ready to put me to bed, but I seized a moment when she was in another room to escape. Night was falling, but I knew the road; my fears of the excommunicated in bestial form, of sorcerers and of ghosts, were then at their height, and my imagination was exalted by fever. I had two visions on the way.

I was near the junction of the Oudun and Joux roads when I saw a great beast behind me. I shuddered, but was not terror-stricken; then, turning round again, I saw it extend long paws as if to embrace me. I uttered a piercing shriek, and instead of the animal, I thought I saw Maître Berthier in his night-cap fifty paces down the road to Oudun. I hid in a thicket expecting him to pass my way, but I heard nothing. Doubtless he was returning along the road to Joux, thinking to meet me. The extraordinary thing was that at fifty paces I had recognised the features and hooked nose of Maître Berthier perfectly: an impossible feat. I went on my way. In the Grand-Pré and opposite my valley, I saw Julie, who smilingly beckoned me to her. But I knew it could not be Julie, and fled in terror. I reached home bathed in sweat, and felt faint as I entered. I was put to bed at once and repose calmed me.

Thus ended my sojourn with Maître Berthier, an epoch for ever memorable in my life, and one which brought me to the close of my eleventh year, for it was now the beginning of November.

I had tertian fever all through the winter of 1746. As it left me with two good days in three, I applied myself to reading, writing and arithmetic; I looked after the bees, the ewes and the lambs, and all the denizens of the fowl run; my sickness did not worry me, for I had seen many of my companions with it, and not one of them had died.

In the spring, my mother, seeing that the attacks, with fever and delirium, were as violent as ever, wrote to consult my brother Boujat, who advised her to purge me with rhubarb and manna. I went to bed for the treatment; and I did not rise from it. It was the end of my beauty. On the day after my purge, all the symptoms of smallpox were declared. The fever continued; the eruption began, and for three days I fell into the most terrible delirium. It was of dogs and snakes that I was afraid. I would jump out of bed thinking that I was pursued by dogs, or that my shirt was full of snakes; I would shake it to make them fall out. My father, for all his strength, could hardly hold me down. They gave me up for lost. I remember my delirium perfectly, and the discomfort following upon it, which was so excessive that I have ever since dreaded smallpox more than any other disease. At last my sufferings abated, and I slept; but the eruption had been so abundant that it took seventeen days of sponging to part my lids. This gave me some conception of blindness; and of the ecstasy of one who recovers sight. My mother nursed me indefatigably; she witnessed my transports over the first glimpse of light, which came to me after she had been bathing my eyelids with a decoction of lentils for a long time. . . . Messire Antoine Foudriat came to see me, but would not confess me as she asked him to; he charged her to do this, in order, he said, "that having seen into his heart you may know what is to do for its preservation."

When I was cured of the smallpox, my face was as ugly as it had been handsome. My features were coarsened, and completely changed; my curly, chestnut-gold hair had fallen; it grew again black and straight. I saw myself for the first time in the glass with a kind of horror, and, from that moment, became even more of a bear. I had now nothing left to give me confidence; and though I had desired ardently to resemble Geneviève's Comtois, I found that nature had gone too far. Perhaps it was this ugliness which prevented me from seeking out Julie Barbier; though in any case I should not have dared to show myself at the schoolmaster's house again. He had written very stiffly to my father, and this had brought about a coldness between them.

By the following summer my health was amazingly better. I read and I wrote. I was so fired by the *Lives of the Saints* that I longed to go to Turkey so as to be martyred there. With harvest time, I forgot all my troubles, for

Jacquot wanted to go reaping. Harvesting is profitable to the poor, for they are paid in wheat, which gives them a subsistence for part of the winter. My father granted leave to his shepherd, and, remembering a distant relative in Nitry, a widow with two sons by an unfortunate marriage with a certain Courtcou, he decided to ask for one of her boys as shepherd. However both brothers were in service, one at Marsangis, the other at Coutarnoux, and he had to wait a month for one to be free. With rapture I heard the joyful news that I was to be shepherd again.

I rose at dawn and set out in the dew. As the way to my valley was closed to me by unreaped fields, my only pastures were the fallow land of Mau-repos, and Côte-Grêle or la Creuse, together with the Prés-des-Rôs where there was an old wild apple tree religiously preserved by the owners. (O simple kindliness, you exist no longer, even in Sacy!) Its branches drooped to within two feet of the ground, so that it was easy to climb into; and thereafter the branches were arranged in steps, so that I could mount as high as I liked. Towards the close of one scorching day, I was letting my flocks pasture in the cool of evening. I had been sitting up in the wild apple tree, but as day fell, I came down and lay at its foot. I was just comfortably settled when I heard the piercing squeals of a young pig. Frightened, I climbed into the tree again and, at the same moment, saw a wolf crouched at the foot of it in a threatening attitude. Twenty paces away a combat was in progress which amazed me. The sow rushed to the aid of her sounder (almost as black as his father the wild boar), charged the robber wolf and, lifting him with her snout, flung him more than ten feet through the air. I was enraptured; but I did not dare leave my tree on account of the other wolf, who was standing guard over it with gleaming eyes. So I shouted :"Wolf, wolf!" with all my might. My cries were heard at the house, and the dogs, who had gone back there to drink, were the first to arrive. Friquette soon rid me of my wolf. The one that had attacked the pig was sitting on his haunches beyond the wheat field which bordered the meadow, watching what was happening. The two mastiffs went for him, while Friquette gave his comrade a taste of her sharp teeth. I got down then; my father arrived with his gun, and the ploughboys with iron forks for pitching manure. The wolf which had treed me had adroitly fooled Friquette by passing close in front of his companion, so that she went for him instead; then, seeing that the dogs were well away, he came back. But my father was there to meet him, and broke one of his legs with a lucky shot. The old wolf tried to get away but was met by the returning mastiffs, who held him long enough to give my father and the ploughboys time to come up, and kill him. My father thought he was a man-eater, or just going to become one; and commented on his sagacity in sending the young one to the attack, while holding aloof himself. It is a fact that the young wolf was unwise to attack a pig; had he chosen a lamb I should never have been aware of it, and for the first time would have lost one of my nurslings. I must not omit the scene that followed on the sow's rescue of her little one; the whole herd, composed of three complete litters less one – that is to say, of thirty-three pigs – made a circle round the injured sounder, the younger on the inside and the older ones on the outside, and began responding to its complaints with grunts so like to conversation that I stood amazed. I had no doubt at the time that they were comforting it. The mother stood outside the circle, her bristles terribly erect; from time to time she uttered a kind of sigh which had something frightful about it. This strange scene made a profound impression upon me, and has indisposed me to the Cartesian system so untimely revived by Buffon (who has too often sacrificed truth to his fear of the Sorbonne) in his eloquent but fallacious *Discours sur la nature des Animaux*; though he afterwards returned to sound principles in his short *Histoire du Castor.* As we were going home, Friquette came back from hunting the young wolf with her body full of thorns which my father pulled out: a proof that she had clinched with the enemy.

This incident did not keep me from venturing next day into the deep and sombre valley of *Bourdenet*, where I heard that the rye had been cut. There I was joined by my friend Étienne Dumont, who brought his herd of cows and goats to my pasture. I thrilled with a pleasure that he genuinely shared; for he had much to tell me, as we had had no private conversation since my return from Joux. First of all he told me how all the village was saying that I had killed a wolf on the previous evening, elaborating his statement with astonishing details which give some idea of the way in which legends grow.

"You had just come to the Prés-des-Rôs and were sitting under Mère Lamberlin's apple-tree, when a white wolf, the very same one that ate up your Germain's little sister twenty years ago, came up behind you and tried to get you by the throat; but you flung your arms round him and he carried you about on his back without being able to bite you. Your nursing-sow came to the rescue and tossed the wolf into the air with one thrust of her tushes; then you let go and, when he fell, you hit him hard with your iron-shod stick; and then the sow tossed him again, ripping open his belly; and when he fell again you hit him again with your stick, and then the sow charged again, and so on till he was almost dead. Then your father came up and said: "Ah! son Nicolas has killed a wolf! That is what I call being brave." And then he fired at him and broke one of his legs. And then the dogs despatched him. And then Germain cut off his head with a chopper; and he took the skin for the collar of Flammand, your wheel horse, and sold the head in Vaux-St-Martin after having shown it to everyone in Sacy. Oh! what teeth it had! Marie Fouard trembled all over and said: 'Oh! suppose it had bitten him!' for she always loved you."

I told Étienne the truth about the matter, but the other version was very much better established than mine, probably because it was more extraordinary. Étienne informed me that my father and Germain had agreed that the incident was not to be related as it had happened. I had to give way; also my vanity preferred the legend to the truth, and the story as Étienne told it was the only one current in the district.

My friend and I passed an agreeable evening, one of those which I remember with greatest pleasure from my childhood. It was the last time that we went together to the pastures.

My mother, timid as are all women, had been so frightened by the evening's mishap, that she had sent to Nitry to know whether one of the Courtcous could not come immediately. François, the elder and reputed the less dissolute, had just been dismissed by his master; and he returned with the maid-servant who had been sent to fetch him. Although Nannon was blear-eyed and hideously ugly, he tried to seduce her in the woods, through which he made her come on the pretext that the way was shorter. She did not yield to him (she said afterwards), but she was so flattered by the attempt that she was kind to the author of it. It would have been better to have exposed me to the wolves than to throw me into such society. I was allowed to accompany the new shepherd on his first day, for he had to know the lie of the land and the best valleys for pasture. With the coming of Courtcou, my innocence of heart, untouched till then, suffered grievous injury.

François Courtcou, and his brother Pierre who succeeded him, had been corrupted by vagrancy since their father's death. They were disobedient and rebellious to their worthy mother, who remonstrated with them but, by reason of her poverty, could not control them. Fifteen to sixteen or even seventeen years old, they were passing through that period of effervescence which follows on the development of a new power; beggary had degraded them below their fellows; it had taken the spirit out of them, made them envious and vicious. It is a fact, which all my experience corroborates, that the baser passions of the poor, whom poverty has not besotted, are extremely strong; and their fierce lubricity far exceeds that of the rich. The poor have nothing, and they want everything, passionately; all the girls are beyond their reach, and they would like to violate every one of them; for tender love is a stranger to their degraded souls. The effects of this passion among the lusty poor must be seen to be conceived. I am only stating what I have myself seen,* not only in the brothers Courtcou, but in the one-

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*Fellow-citizen and reader, few of your polished writers and pretty versifiers could teach you what I will teach you. Read me with perseverance, in spite of some childish details (for these are necessary) and you will see that, after having read me, you will know many things of which you did not even suspect the existence. My ambition is not to demonstrate, with your dramatists and your philosophers, the great truths which you already know; I shall pass over all that as far as possible; you have Voltaire and Rousseau and Buffon; all of whom, in spite of frequent errors, will instruct you in them better than I can. I only ask you to take note of those new things which I tell you frankly and honestly. Reflect that you should be more interested in what I have to say than in a lying traveller who tells hearsay stories of distant lands which you will never see; who romanticises Africa, and the Bushmen, and the Kaffirs; and especially the Hottentots, as did Vaillant. I speak only of your own country, fifty leagues from the capital; I tell only of what I have seen and done, or am sure of. Fellow-citizen, how many truths seen, but unheeded, you will find in this work! And when I come to speak of your own locality, compare what I say with what I am telling you now, and judge of my scrupulous veracity. May I bring this important work without hindrance to an end! and bequeathe a unique monument to my age, as I have already left to it *Les Contemporaines* in sixty-five volumes, including the *Françaises*, the *Parisiennes*, the *Nationales*, and the *Filles du Palais-Royal*; as I have left it the *Paysan-*

armed Lemme, and the ex-soldier Quentine, etc., all of them malformed and very powerful.

But the Courtcous exceeded in salacity anyone I had ever known. They were of Nitry where principles are looser, the air purer, and the heart more corrupt than at Sacy. My father had a rough idea of the two brothers, but he had lived in Nitry at a time when it was very much less corrupt; when depravity such as François's could not have been conceived, still less that of Pierre. The Courtcous approximated to the cannibal of Languedoc, taken and broken at Toulouse in 1783, whose special fancy was for eating young girls, and who said horribly to his judges: "Ah! but if you knew how good they taste!"

On the very first day, I asked François if he knew any stories. He gave a hideous smile: "Oh, certainly, Monsieur Nicolas! I know plenty of stories, and good ones too. I can tell tales of sorcerers and ghosts, of compacts with the devil and of the excommunicated who are turned into beasts and clothed in the devil's skin, and eat people; of robbers who kill or carry off girls to their caves and violate them, and then strangle and eat them when the beginnings of pregnancy make their flesh more tender.* Then there are stories of sorcerer-shepherds; or of the man who made himself wings and flew like a goshawk, and ate nothing but white bread which he stole from the town bakeries, and game that he trapped in the country, and birds – wild geese, ducks, woodcock, peewits, starlings, partridges, and rooks – out of which he made an excellent soup, and chickens which he stole from the village. Now then, which would you like me to tell you?"

Paysanne Pervertis; as I shall leave it the *Nuits de Paris*. Dear fellow-citizens, may I be able to complete the sixth and last volume of the *Idées Singulières*! I shall die content when I have finished everything. – *This 18th of May 1784, amidst fears and threats relative to my illustrated,* Paysan-Paysanne.

*Cows were mounted to fatten them.

I was in a predicament! I found all the tales equally tempting. However I only thought a short while, because it was so much time lost, and finally decided on the *Flying Man.* This would make a long story to relate here if I had not already used it for *Victorin,* in the *Découverte d'Australe,* much as it was told me by François, who was nicknamed Pock-Mark.

After he had told me the story of the Flying Man, including therein a certain abominable adventure which had befallen his brother in the house where he was working at Coutarnoux, we amused ourselves with plans. "If we had wings, we would do such and such." Virtue had no place in François's imagination. He described the girls of Nitry, whom he would have liked to ravish away to some rocky fastness in the woods. Here he would have fed them, and here enjoyed their favours and their tears, their terrors and their disgust; for he included this last detestable refinement among his pleasures, seeing that he was terribly disfigured by small-pox. Complacently he drew the obscenest pictures of what he would exact from his miserable victims, giving them scorn for scorn: he visualised himself feared and entreated, then caressed through fear; and this seemed the only motive that gratified him. These are, in fact, the frightful desires natural to a character soured and vitiated by opprobrium and misery. *Poverty is not a vice, but it is the soil in which it flourishes.* Happily there was nothing in my nature which responded to his brutal pleasures, combining as I do a tender heart with lively passions.

The following week was the feast of St. Christophe, the patron saint of Nitry. My father was going to attend it, and took me with him to see my Aunt Madelon. If ever kindness and virtue, the love of kin and of the family from which one issues, existed in perfection, it was in the heart of

Madelon Restif. She had been the fairest girl in the canton, but her beauty brought her no happiness; for her first husband was a pretty scamp, favoured by my grandfather because he was witty and had property. He was soon in debt, enlisted, and left for the Italian wars under Catinat. His wife followed him. On leaving the worthy Anne-Marguerite Simon, her mother, she said weeping: "*And they twain shall be one flesh;* I will not put asunder what God has joined together." For four years she followed the army with the sutlers, herself one of them, and yet lost nothing of her native innocence, although her husband was plunged in debauchery of both kinds. . . . Bourrelier d'Aiguesmortes died two years after his return home, leaving no children, and Madelon found herself almost ruined. An intelligent man named Gautherin, a distant relative, took her affairs in hand and made them straight in a few years. He conceived a great respect for the young widow and begged my father to propose him in marriage. The honest man was bashful because he was blind of one eye. My father was delighted to give his "good sister," as he always called her, to one who was practical and enlightened, wise and economical; so he proposed M. Gautherin and she accepted him. There were no children by this marriage either; but she loved her brother's as if they had been her own, and I was the special object of her kindness and of her tender and sincere affection. Therefore when a visit to my Aunt Madelon was proposed, I was beside myself with joy. My father did me a most signal kindness when he took me with him to the patronal festival at Nitry.

A private reason, which no one divined, increased my satisfaction. I was curious to see several pretty girls of whom François talked continually. He specially extolled Ursule Lamas, known through all the countryside as *The beautiful Ursule*; Edmée Boissard, granddaughter through her mother of the good Maître Berthier; Catin Doré,* Georgette Lemoine and some others. We left home early. I was still handsome at a distance, though not close to; and my mother, by waving my returning hair, had given it an appearance of natural curl. I had a new hat and a shirt with stiff cuffs; a red coat, waistcoat and breeches of azure blue, fine-woven cotton stockings, and shoes with buckles set with brilliants, very old but all the brighter for that. My aunt could not look at and fondle me enough. On the way to mass she held me by the hand, and displayed me to her old friends who had known my grandfather, Pierre. "Hem! Here is another true Restif! . . . Look at his features: the eyes, the aquiline nose. . . . The eldest son of the first marriage is also a true Restif, but the second is only a Dondène."† All these good women welcomed me and wanted to run home for cakes or fruits, but my aunt would not let them: "You know I have plenty of everything at home," she said, "and a Restif does not make a god of his belly."

We were just nearing the church, opposite to which is the horse pond, when there came out of a near-by house a young girl, or rather, a nymph (as later Jeannette Rousseau appeared to me), who was driving home some goslings and their mother. I was struck as by lightning with her beauty. "Edmée," my aunt called, "this is your cousin Nicolas from Sacy. Aren't you going to kiss him?" Edmée ran up; but she blushed and grew confused

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*It must be remarked that *Catin* was the favourite name for girls at Nitry, as Marthon (pronounced Mathron) was at Sacy, whence the proverb:

> *Des ribans aux Catins de Nintry,*
> *Des galotes aux Mathrons de Sacy,*

which expresses their two characters. The girls of Nitry loved pleasure, ribbons and the dance; they were all unhappy as wives and were beaten by their husbands; the girls of Sacy were serious and hardworking, and wanted the substantial goods of life, as symbolised by *galotes*, morsels of paste cooked in milk and the most satisfying of all dishes.

†My father's first wife was a Dondène.

as she drew near. My aunt made us kiss each other, and then we all went to church together. I glanced at my pretty cousin with a kind of ecstasy and then, as though dazzled, lowered my eyes. I was conscious to the bottom of my heart of my natural bashfulness, which would have been much more embarrassing had not my father been adored in Nitry, and if I had not been well dressed and surrounded by relatives who had an undeservedly high opinion of me. Edmée left us to go to her own place, and I was glad; the emotion she aroused was too poignant and, as she was too mature for me, I felt with pain that she would be another's portion. But I did know that I longed to repeat with her the incident with Nannette, or better still, the one with Julie.

As we entered the church, everybody stood up; first to look at us, but, a moment later, all eyes turned towards the main door, both sides of which were open. A beautiful girl, tall and luxuriantly moulded, entered between her two brothers, six foot apiece and as handsome as herself. She was in a white dress all covered with ribbons, red, blue and green; and her complexion dimmed the brightness of the roses in the great bouquet she was carrying. No Paris lady, with her diamonds, powder and rouge, and all else that art invents for the enhancement of her charms, has ever looked to me so dazzling. She quite eclipsed Nannette who, eleven months before, had roused my first desires; she was a flower in the perfection of its bloom. All eyes were fixed upon her and, seeing that I too was looking, my aunt said: "That is Ursule Lamas. Her father was the greatest friend of your father in his youth. . . . Ursule," she called to her, "can you guess who this youngster is?" "Clearly he is a Restif," said Ursule looking at me, "a little disfigured by the smallpox." She kissed me twice. Her cheeks were as soft as my cousin Nannon's, and the perfume of her roses enveloped me; or it may have been her breath, I do not know which; but no woman ever smelt so good. All the same, my admiration was impersonal; Edmée Boissard had more deeply attracted me: her slight build, something shy and virginal about her, accorded better with my taste than Ursule's perfect charms. After I had offered holy water to my aunt and to the Fair, my uncle, who was behind us, conducted me to his stall in the choir, and then took his place among the choristers. My father, since he had relinquished the honoured Pierre's seat in the church, never would accept any of those offered to him by his relatives and friends: "I am no one now at Nitry!" he would say. And he would exile himself to a place by the door, under the bells and behind the poor. There he prayed upon the tomb of his father, who rested in that place. And no one ever saw him leave the church save with tears in his eyes.

During the offertory* I was engaged in verifying what François had told me of the beauty of his fellow-townswomen. I noticed several of very agreeable appearance, but Edmée Boissard eclipsed them all. For every man and every woman there is one kind of charm which is irresistible, and it is this, when found in a person of the opposite sex, which produces true love. I am still convinced that I have only loved one Fair – for me the veritable Venus – although I have lusted after other women. Ursule Lamas, Nannette and their equals in beauty, never excited anything more than desire: the physical conformation of Marie Fouard, with somewhat more of beauty,

*At great festivals all the girls over fifteen went up to the offertory, contributing a farthing each; it was a sort of display, an attenuated representation of the ancient Spartan custom of making all young girls who had attained maturity dance naked in the market place, surrounded by the marriageable youths. At Nitry, as at Sacy, the girls occupied the whole nave and the men, the choir and the transepts. This facilitated a thorough and detailed inspection of the long defile, which passed slowly and with modesty because of the kissing of the paten. At Courgis, the girls only went up to the offertory if they were going to communicate.

which was also that of Edmée Boissard, of Julie, of Ursule Simon, of Jeannette Rousseau, of Colette, of Zéphyre, of Rose Bourgeois, of Louise . . . was in each case necessary to inspire love, tenderness and faithful affection. I wanted to examine all the girls, but my eyes once fixed upon Edmée, I could see no one but her. On leaving the church, she came up to my aunt with Ursule. I was not shy with Ursule; but I was with Edmée. My aunt presented me to the latter's mother, who still bore traces of her past great beauty, and this increased the daughter's loveliness in my eyes. She addressed me with that kindliness common to the good women of my native place. I had another uncle by marriage in Nitry, Pierre Leclerc, the husband of my Aunt Marie, my father's younger sister. My aunt took me to pay my respects to him; he was a tall handsome man, but indolent and careless; his son, who was a year or two older than myself, was with him. We made acquaintance; but young Leclerc was jealous of me because my aunt did not pet him half as much as she did me. She saw that he was hurt, and said to him: "Leclerc, do you think I have forgotten that you are my sister's son, and almost an orphan for the last four or five years, since she went to Paris? No, dear nephew; and yet you must let me be a little fonder of your cousin, because he bears the name of my revered father. And then you are here all the time, while your cousin is only here for to-day, and perhaps I shall never see him again." She grew sad, for she was aware that my father meant to take me to the Abbé Thomas at Paris in the following autumn. Leclerc seemed satisfied with this explanation, and my aunt took father and son home to dine with us. As I have never liked to put myself forward, and, on the contrary, suffer for a too obvious favouritism, I made advances to Leclerc. My aunt noticed this, for she said to my father, taking care not to be overheard by Leclerc: "I could detect a Restif even if I did not know him, just by hearing him talk and watching him act. Look at your son, disfigured as he is, and compare him with the coarse, heavy stock of the Leclercs." My father might have answered that the blood of young Leclerc was half Restif, but he smiled instead, saying: "All I see, Sister, is your goodwill to me and to the name of our worthy father (may God keep him in his bosom!). . . . I do not know why the Restifs, who are only commoners after all, have such an extravagant idea of their excellence that their daughters dislike changing their name and the men glory to bear it. My father was the most modest person I have ever known, as long as he was not talking about his family; and yet he could not pronounce any other name without a touch of disdain. One would have thought that he really believed in his descent from the Emperor Pertinax, and that our two grandmothers Courtenay were in the direct line. Filial respect is hereditary among us; for I do not think that anyone ever surpassed him in respect for his father, any more than in gaiety, intelligence and greatness of soul." He had brought the family tree with him, and read it to his brothers-in-law, who had not heard it before. They were wonderstruck, and the praises of my grandfather resounded on every side. Still they did not forget his failings: his prodigalities and his recklessness, his love of banter and his sharp tongue. But the brother and sister explained these away as they were mentioned, transforming each fault into another virtue. Blessed is the son to whom everything about his father seems good!

After dinner, all our relatives of both sexes came to see my father, sole offshoot of an honoured name; and all claimed him for the midday or evening meal, while my aunt was wishful to keep us to herself. Edmée Boissard, Ursule Simon, Catin Doré, Georgette Lemoine, Catiche *Tous les jours*, Dodiche Gautherin, Ursule Lamas, and other daughters of my family came with the rest – and all of them among the most charming girls in the countryside. They took me to their gardens to give me posies, while their parents talked with my father, my aunt and my uncles. I showed a marked preference for the pretty Boissard, and Ursule Simon said, laughing: "I am more nearly related to you than Edmée, little cousin, and bear a name which, after your own, is the most respected in Nitry – your grandmother's." "Oh, cousin," I answered, "believe me, I think as highly of you as of Edmée Boissard, but I cannot help wanting to be near her." Ursule Simon kissed Edmée, saying: "You see, you are the prettier," and then to me: "You are like your father at the same age, as my mother describes him; clear-sighted, frank and kindly. You are quite right. Edmée is the prettiest girl in the countryside, and if I were a boy I should prefer her to the beautiful Ursule." Edmée overheard her: "Be quiet, chatterbox. Can you not see that I am making our little cousin a chaplet of roses?" "Please make it out of yours," I exclaimed, "and take the fresh ones for yourself." "Ah, the little rogue!" she said, "he's a flirt, and his father certainly was not that." Ursule smiled and, thinking I had not heard, continued: "Whether it is Edmée, Ursule or myself – we have kept you here much too long, and all the time my young sister . . . Anne Marguerite . . . who did not dare to come. . . . Let us go to our garden. She must see you too." And she took us to her garden.

I was like Cupid, walking crowned with roses in the midst of a choir of young girls. I thought of Julie. "Ah, if she could see me now!" We found Madame Simon busy preparing a collation, for she was expecting my father. She welcomed me as though I had been her own son, and then called her youngest child: "Anne, come and see the young cousin from Sacy whom you so wanted to meet." A tall slight girl entered, younger than myself, who promised to be as pretty as Edmée Boissard in a few years; she was rather dark, like all the Simons, but her smile was celestial. I was impressed by her, and her mother, perceiving this, put her hand into mine; I could feel it trembling. "Kiss each other," she said, "for you are children of good parents and good friends." I looked at Anne with all the more interest, because here, perhaps, was the wife my father had in mind for me. The idea was not unpleasant: Julie was too much the lady for me, and I did not feel I had the necessary qualities to win her. I put her completely out of my mind and even gave no more thought to our Sacy beauties after this visit. It was Anne Simon, and later Mlle Fanchette, who gave me the idea of marriage as a goal, as I suggest this in the *Nouvel Abeilard,* published in 1778.

This happy day passed in a flash. When I remember the joyous days of my youth, up to my departure from Auxerre in 1755, I find that maturity has given me nothing like them, and that I have lost something with every passing year. This is the significance of the grand allegories in *Genesis*; the birth of a man is as the birth of the human race; his first weakness through a woman, as that of the Father of the Species through our common Mother; the experience we acquire with age and by instruction, the fruit of *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,* etc. . . . Miserable mortals! You are happy when you cannot appreciate it, and wretched when your faculties have reached their full development.

We left at sunset after a supper with M. Simon at which the whole family was present. They all came to set us upon our way, fathers and mothers, daughters and sons. My father took the *la Farge* road as being the most beautiful by which to leave Nitry. I walked between my aunt, who was holding one of my hands, and Anne Simon, whose hand had been given me by her mother in the presence of her father and of mine. Edmée Boissard was on the other side of my aunt. My father walked in the last of three rows of old men, followed by the rest of the girls, behind whom again were their mothers; while the boys closed the procession. Under a clear sky, the flowers covering a wide tree-bordered plain perfumed the air, and a breeze refreshed us; we listened to my father, who repeated the sayings of wise Christophe Berthier, the schoolmaster, as I have quoted them in the *Vie de Mon Père.* The hearts of all of us were softened, and a special tenderness shone in the lovely eyes of Edmée Boissard as she listened to this commemoration of her grandfather's virtue. At the end of his second discourse we said goodbye. We were kissed all round, and it was as though in leaving mine, the family were parting from its own father. For they looked upon him as their head, and that he should live in Sacy was a constant grief to them. Had he said: "I am coming back to live among you," not only his family but all Nitry would have made holiday. I noticed that my dear aunt and all her company turned twenty times to look back; my father was moved, but silent.

When we had gone down into the valley of la Farge where we were no longer visible, my father said: "Nicolas, we have just left the place where I was born. It is dear to me for that reason, and because I lived there with my honoured father; I never go to Nitry, and I go often, as I own a hundred acres of land there, without paying him a tribute of tears as bitter as on the day I lost him. . . . It was a great misfortune for me at twenty to lose a father who was only forty; and who was on the point of recovering more than he had lost by an excellent deal with the monks of Molême, which fell through owing to his death. . . . I mourn him every day, though he was very harsh with me, as I have countless times related to you when we are together of an evening: but never in complaint against this worthy man, whom I honour and cherish dead, as I loved, honoured and cherished him in his lifetime, in spite of his severity. You must not think that my father ever spoke to or conversed with me when he took me into the country! I had to walk behind him and dared not ask one question or say a single word. Whereas I talk to you, and to all of you. Not because I set myself above my worthy father – far from it! but because I find so much less merit in myself, that I do not feel justified in acting in the same way as one with so much wit, such worth, that all admired him. Still less do I consider my way of bringing you up superior to his, but I lack the firmness and all those other qualities which authorised his fine severity; for in one word he could imply a hundred; a thing impossible to me, since I want his wit. Nor have I ever overrated my intelligence, for I had good relatives who appraised me to my face: such, for instance, was M. Jean Restif of Noyers, the lawyer; from whom I learnt all that I know of legal practice. As you know, this enables me to arbitrate among our neighbours, and has earned me the confidence and consideration of the district; for M. Restif, seeing that I was not very clever, concentrated entirely on developing my common sense. Nor did he mince matters when I was walking with him one day from my father's house to Noyers.

"'Edm'lot,' said he, 'you know that I am very fond of you, because you are my relative and the son of a worthy man and a virtuous woman and because you bear my name; and most of all because you have a good character; therefore I will speak frankly and directly. Two of my cousins are in my office, Daiguesmortes and you; and I love you equally well although he is my cousin-german while you are only the son of a cousin-german; but the name is worth more than one degree of proximity. Daiguesmortes is able, and will go far some day; but you are not at all clever and this is a great grief to your father, for he is as clever as a man can well be. Still you are honest and sensible; and with these qualities you will be neither less happy nor less esteemed for your want of brains; for you have a rectitude which has always given me great hopes of you. Therefore, little cousin, concentrate on the solid things in knowledge and in practice, for that is all you are fit for; and you will only waste your time if you try to learn the same things as Daiguesmortes. Take this advice from a good friend and relative, who gives it you out of affection, in the hope that it may be of use to you.'

"Those, my son, were the words of good Jean Restif whom I hope you will see at our next patronal festival. He has promised for a long time to come, and I have begged him to do so this year, that he may form some opinion of you with regard to your future as he did of your eldest brother, who is now curé of Courgis.*

"And as I in everything followed his advice in the case of my eldest son; so will I follow it in yours; exhorting you to engrave all that he says upon your mind, so that you may never forget it."

After this discourse, well worthy of such a father, Edme Restif gave me his opinion upon certain faults of which I had been guilty towards my mother and elder sisters. And then, to end up, he set himself to amuse me, and related one of his stories; the one of his first journey to Paris (which I have retold in his Life), doubtless to make me want to see that great city. We reached home at night-fall.

I do not think that there has ever been a similar example of paternal confidence; it is one of the most beautiful incidents in my father's life and one of the strongest of his claims to my undying gratitude.

*After 47 years he is still curé of Courgis, on this 14th of August, 1793. Happy is this pastor, if too rigid principles have not tormented his own life and his flock's!

The day following my visit to Nitry I accompanied François to the pastures. I attached myself to him, not, as with Jacquot, because I liked him, but through curiosity and a kind of budding inclination for his licentious talk, which titillated what the pious would call my concupiscence. He interspersed these obscene narratives with the stories he had promised me, but he always found means to bring them round to his favourite subject, lechery. Thus wizards only used their spells to lure girls into the woods, where they would satisfy a sorcerer's salacity. If he was describing a Witches' Sabbath, he would draw revolting pictures of crapulous debauch. If the story was of an excommunicated soul clothed in the Devil's skin, the wretch would glut himself on the fairest girls. But especially he revelled in stories of robbers who lived in caves, to which they would take ladies, snatched from their carriages upon the road or stolen from their mansions; and he would depict scenes as spirited as they were licentious. What a difference between his way of telling a story and that of good simple Jacquot, who told tales for the love of them, or Jean Vezinier, whose eccentric imagination was only satisfied by stories like in kind to the Visions of Quevedo.*

But loose as were the stories of François Courtcou, he never went as far as his brother Pierre, who succeeded him at the end of a month. I imagine that François was sent away for neglecting his duty as a shepherd, for the sheep suffered in his care. When I was not with him, he led the flocks into poor pastures and lay down and slept, without taking the trouble to climb

*I have not mentioned Jean Vezinier, a born mechanic, and the first to speak to me of making himself wings which would enable him to fly like a first-year chicken. His story of the Morats, or the little children of Death, which he told me in his barn when I was about five, was an extravagant conception! Death, their mother, gave them earth stew and earth bread, instead of soup and pap.

as far as my valley. He was replaced by his brother, who was reputed to be much more industrious; and as far as this went my parents were not deceived in him.

Never, perhaps, was there a worse character than Pierre Courtcou, nor one who knew better how to disguise his vices; but his sly expression, his smouldering eye, at once timid and evil, spoke truly and showed all the ugliness of his soul. He displeased my mother when she first saw him, and she forbade me to become familiar with him. But the rascal soon won her good graces by a great industry and a seeming zeal for the interests of the house; and so carefully disguised his wickedness that my mother sometimes said of him: "One must never judge by appearances, for Pierre's is most evil: I should have been frightened to meet him in a wood, and yet he is a good lad." Even my father was taken in by this dangerous sycophant. As for me, to tell me a story was to win me; and he had a great store, with more art in narration than his brother. In the *École des Pères*, I have observed that the dialect of Nitry was not uncouth; the speech was pure enough, and only had certain peculiarities. Thus it had no nasals: *an* or *en*, *om* or *on*, *um* or *un*, were uttered clearly as in Greek, or as if the consonants were doubled; thus *pan* was pronounced *pann*; *pain, painn*; *empecher, emmpecher*; *on, onn*; *bien, bienn*; *cousin, cousinn*; *un, unn*; etc. Gerunds and all other words in which a nasal sound is essential were avoided; and this pronunciation was very agreeable in the mouths of pretty girls with the soft silver-clear voices which are common at Nitry. Such was the speech in which Pierre Courtcou delivered his stories to an adolescent boy, avid for this entertainment, and who had delighted in tales told in the disagreeable dialect of Sacy. I listened to the shepherd with so much pleasure that a story once begun enchained me to him, as Mercury held his hearers by the golden chain which issued from his mouth. He made me neglect my writing, at which my parents wanted me to work indoors.*

The first of Courtcou's stories had been often told me by my mother, but in a much shorter, simpler form; and without the numerous obscenities which I veiled when inserting it in the *Nouvel Abeilard* under its title of *Demi-Poulet.* The second, also amplified by Pierre, in which I replaced the obscenities by analogous incidents, occurs in the same work under the title of *Les Quatre Belles et Les Quatre Bêtes.* In this story Courtcou let himself go, and revelled in salacious detail. He scorned the two simple and decent versions of my mother.

The third was called

ONLY AUDACITY AVAILS AGAINST THE DEVIL

A Knight who had returned from the Holy Land in very bad case, for he had not enough money to seek shelter at the inns, passed in front of a fine castle. "What a fine castle," he said to himself, "I must go to it; perchance the loyal castellan will have a welcome for me and my horse, who is none the better for his pilgrimage; so true is it that

To ride to Rome is not the least
Use to a bad man or good beast."

So saying the Knight, who was handsome and young, knocked with the knocker three times upon the gate. No one answered: but beside the great door he saw a little one, which stood ajar, and by this he entered. Keys had been left in all the doors and he explored all the rooms, finding good beds and furniture, but not a single person! There was bread in the kitchen, and meat on the hooks; fire ready on the hearth and only wanting a match. As the Knight was hungry, he set fire to the wood, took a piece of meat from the hooks, put it on the spit, and while one side was cooking, went to look after his horse. Then he came back and turned the spit and warmed himself. But he was astonished: for all the time he was expecting some one to come, to whom he might excuse himself for the liberty he had taken. But night fell and no one had appeared.

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*I wrote badly, for I was already beginning to take to that speedy script in which the jumbled letters resemble Greek ligatures. Our writings were characteristic: my father, whose passions were controlled and who had worked with a solicitor, wrote a fine slanting round hand, legible as a book, and very close, though large; my eldest brother's was a scrawl, illegible because he made notes on everything he read. My own showed the disorder of my passions and my ardent vagabond imagination; it was irregular: a crowd of ideas urged on my pen and prevented a proper forming of the letters. This has made me a constant foe to doubled letters, quite useless in so many words.

When the Knight had eaten the meat he had roasted, which seemed to have a flavour between veal and pork, and drunk some wine which he found on the sideboard, he still did not like to go to bed without speaking to someone. Just at that moment he heard some peasants passing by the gate, chittering and chattering as if they were afraid. The Knight went to the little door, but when they saw him come out by it they set themselves to run and flee away, to such purpose that he could not catch them. Fortunately two others came up behind them, who had not seen him come out of the castle, and had no fear of him. "Can you tell me, my friends," he said to them, "why this fine castle is uninhabited?" "Oh! sir, do not go in there!" "There are beds and furniture, bread and wine, and meat on the hook, and not a single person." "Oh, sir," said the peasants, "have you been in there?" "I have done more, I have eaten and drunk there." He had hardly finished speaking, when the two peasants made the sign of the Cross and fled away. "Dear me," said the Knight, "what can it mean?" He heard more people approaching; he went up to them, and said: "My friends, what is this castle here?" "Oh! sir, do not stop there; the Lord and Lady were forced to abandon it because their daughter, who was as beautiful as the day, put herself in the power of the Devil, and he lends her his skin to run about the fields and woods in, and eat little children. And when she has killed a child she cuts up the meat and hangs it on a hook until it is high, and when it is high she roasts and eats it; for she will never eat raw flesh like the other beasts that devour people." "Could you bring me to the Lord and the Lady of this castle, good people?" "Oh! yes, Sir Knight, for since they have had to leave their castle, they have withdrawn to a farm on the outskirts of the village."

The Knight followed them. When he reached the farm he found the Lord and Lady in deep affliction. They were seated near the fire, never addressing their retainers except by signs, and holding handkerchiefs before their weeping eyes. "Dear Lord, and you, my Lady," said the Knight, "I am astonished that you should be so sorrowful for a castle which you can recover when you want to, for he who stands before you fears neither beast nor devil, having fought with Saracens who are worse than either." "Ah! gallant Knight," answered the Lady, "you do not know the worst about our grief! For this is our trouble: that we do not want to unhouse the cruel Beast who lives in our castle, indeed we provide bread and wine and meat for it, and wood and candles. Yet there is a remedy, but it is too difficult, and twenty valiant knights have already perished." "The greater the danger, Lady, the more eager I am for it," replied the Knight, "and I shall not perish if you will give me permission to attempt this great adventure." "It is not our wish," said the Lord, "but we cannot prevent you. Yet if you persist, and are willing to act faithfully towards an unhappy father and a pitiable mother, you will accept the following conditions, to wit: that you will not slay the Beast; but, hidden in a coffer, will watch until it sleeps;

then, and not before, you will softly stretch your hand from out of the coffer, and take the skin; afterwards you will carefully shut yourself up again inside your coffer until the morning, when we will all come to deliver you. For thus you will put the Beast in our power, without danger or misadventure. Therefore you must depart from us without your weapons; for you must not wound the Beast. Know, too, that the poor child only enters between eleven o'clock and midnight."

The Knight was a little taken aback at having to set out unarmed! still he promised to fulfil all the conditions. He departed. But on his way, fearing to be surprised, he drew out a poignard or dagger, which he always wore beneath his clothes, and held it in his hand. When he had come to the castle of the Beast, he heard his horse whinny: he went to him and found all as he had left it. Then he chose the finest room and made a great fire, after he had set all the doors wide open. He prayed to God and to the Blessed Virgin, to the Archangel Michael, who vanquished the Devil, and to St. Martin the patron saint of Warriors,* and laying himself down in the coffer fell asleep.

But about midnight he was wakened by a great noise, as though everything in the room was being thrown about. Without moving, the Knight looked through the keyhole of his coffer, and saw a tall and beautiful girl in front of the fire. She was giving great sighs, while a little black Man fingered her breasts and took all sorts of other liberties in front of a servant, who was putting a child of six whole upon the spit and two dogs into the turn-spit; then he left the room, saying: "Lady and Mistress, when this is cooked, ring for me and I will make gravy and serve it." Then he left them,

*Martin (Martinus, little Mars) adroitly substituted among the early Frankish Christians for the great Roman Mars. Hence the devotion in this legend for St. Martin who was a soldier.

and the little black Man set himself to enjoy the beautiful girl, who yielded in a fury of abandonment. When they were tired out, the black Man said: "Lady, you will sup alone to-day, for I feel a great danger about me, and I must go and make conjurations." And immediately he departed. "Alas, alas," said the lovely girl, "who will deliver me from my enchantment!" She took off her gold cap, which was very dirty, and began to comb the fine gold hair that brushed her heels. And when she had combed her hair, she began to push about the chairs again as though she were fighting against something invisible. "Keep your accursed skin!" she cried. "If I have sinned, let God punish me; only let me not be in your power!" At last she took up a large rusty-grey skin and threw it upon a chair. She cut a thigh from the roasting flesh, and ate it half-cooked without either bread or sauce, and when she had finished cried: "Drink, ho!" Immediately the servant appeared. He bled a young girl from the throat; the Fair received the blood into her mouth and the servant closed the vein when the girl was about to fall. And he said: "Shall I bring you one of her companions for the second drink, or a young boy?" She said nothing. She pulled off a shoulder and ate it. Then she stamped with her foot, and the servant appeared again with a young boy and a young girl. "Is it long since they pissed?" "Six hours." She made a sign, and the servant gave a great glass to the young girl and a great glass to the young boy and they pissed into them. Then he mixed them in a larger goblet which he presented on his knees. But just as the girl was going to take it, he swallowed it himself, and filled up again with a fine Tokay which she held against the light, saying: "It is beautiful, but let some drops of blood be mixed in it." The servant pricked the boy's throat, and when the Tokay was reddened, she drank.

All this the Knight saw, or as much of it as his uneasy position allowed him; for he was half suffocated and tried to raise the lid a crack in order to breathe. He managed this at last and, without making any noise, opened the coffer and saw, nearly naked before the fire, the most beautiful fair girl that ever was or ever will be. He was dying of desire to leap upon her and possess her; but he reflected that he would not have been advised without good reason to wait until she slept before taking her skin. He restrained himself, therefore, and towards two o'clock the unhappy girl lay down naked upon the floor, and slept.

Thereupon the Knight gently opened his coffer, and slipping to the ground went to take the skin. But hardly had he touched it when he heard the hiss of a great serpent coiled up in a corner of the room upon a bed, from which he came down darting out his tongue. The Knight kept hold of the skin, but hastened to get back into his coffer and shut down the lid before the serpent had quite uncoiled himself. He was no sooner in his box than the Fair Girl awoke. At first she looked about her; then seeing a great serpent hissing at her and opening his jaws as though to devour her, she uttered a loud cry. The Knight was tempted to come out of his box and go to her aid. "Ah! unhappy me!" she cried. "Where is the skin which preserved me from this dreadful serpent?" and she tried to escape. But all she could do was to twist and turn about the jaws of the monstrous reptile who was trying to engulf her. At last he seized her. The Knight, moved by compassion, opened his box and, dagger in hand, threw himself upon the great serpent to slay it. But hardly had he put his foot outside when the half-devoured girl stretched out her hand, touched the skin, and was immediately delivered from the serpent. Then she covered herself with the skin and became a great monstrous greyhound, with the pointed snout of a ferret and sharp teeth protruding from her mouth. While the Knight looked at her in amazement, the great serpent got into the coffer and the Beast leaped upon her saviour; for, though kind and gentle without the skin, once covered with it, her only thought was to bite and tear. Yet nothing that she devoured satisfied her, for when she was a beast, it all passed into the devil's skin; into his head and into his feet; for this skin was flesh, and needed flesh to nourish it; and the Devil, who eats nothing but human flesh, can only devour men and children by means of excommunicated persons. And when there are none of these he is forced to eat . . . what we have already eaten. . . . The Knight was well pleased that he had brought his dagger, for he did not know that the great serpent had only pretended to swallow the girl (without power to do so) to make him come out. So there he was, setting about to defend himself with his dagger, and so well and with such skill (unhappily!) that he cut off one of the greyhound's forelegs.

As soon as the blood began to flow the skin fell away, and in place of a beast was a tall and beautiful Girl who uttered a sigh, and said: "Ah! ungentle Knight! you have cut off my arm." And all her blood ran out. The Knight was much afflicted; he tore up his linen for bandages to staunch the blood, but he could do nothing until the Fair Girl fainted. In this moment of tranquillity, he began to say to himself: "If only I had some means of saving her!" And it seemed to him that if he killed the serpent, its fat would cure the wounded girl. He tried to open the coffer; but he could not . . . then he decided to drag it into the fire, and roast the serpent. But when the coffer began to get hot, the reptile uttered human cries. On which account the Knight having found a hatchet, broke open the coffer; and there came out of it the little black Man whom he had seen at the beginning; the one who would not sup, so that he could go about his incantations. His eyes glowed like fire, and he jumped through a low window, which he opened in a flash, and disappeared. The Knight was as much at a loss as ever; but as the girl was still swooning and her blood no longer flowed, he had time to notice the serpent's skin, which was moving of itself. He pulled it out of the coffer with an iron fork and two small packets fell out of it; but he did not see them. He was disconsolate, and greatly repented having come out of his box against the advice which had been given him. And day was still some way off; so that he must watch the death of this tall and beautiful girl whom he so much desired.

At this very moment he heard his horse neighing and then the noise of feet. It was the Lord and Lady who had come with their retinue. Seeing the Knight, who had put his head out of the window, the Lady uttered a cry of joy, saying: "I am going to see my poor daughter again!" But when she had come in and saw her daughter stretched before the fire with her arm cut off, she tore her hair: "Oh! my daughter, my dear daughter, who has wounded you so pitiably?" The Fair Girl opened her eyes at these words, and her blood began to flow again. "Oh! my dear Mother," she said, "I distressed you . . . by seeing, against your wish . . . a man . . . you did not approve of. . . . And now I am punished . . . for it was . . . the Devil himself. . . . Pardon me . . . and this Knight also who has wounded me . . . mortally . . . for he was fighting for his life. . . . The child who was suffocated in the castle . . . and for whose death a monitory was published and noised about . . . was mine . . . and not the unhappy maidservant's who was hanged; it was the Evil One . . . who made me suffocate it. . . . Thus I have been excommunicated, as I did not confess . . . and clothed in the Devil's skin." As she finished speaking these words, which made the hair rise on every head, she said a prayer commending her soul to God; and then her head fell back as though she were dead.

In bitter grief, the Lord and Lady swore to hang the Knight; for he had armed himself against their daughter, contrary to his word, and had not scrupulously followed what they had enjoined. But first, they wanted to know who he was. "Alas!" answered the Knight, "I deserve death and, if you did not inflict it, I would inflict it upon myself, so grieved am I for having taken away the life of this Fair who moves me to the heart. . . . But I wish to die without being known to you." "Let him be led out to die and let him be hung from the battlements." And they took him. Now his horse, having been in the Holy Land, had found there the speech of Balaam's she-ass, and her master's prophetic gift; that is why he neighed and kicked, and broke his halter. And as they were putting the cord about his dear master's neck, he said: "Speak, Master! or I shall speak." Much astonished, they paused. Then the Knight could no longer hide who he was. "I come from Poitou; I have been to the Holy Land to drive out the infidels, and gain remission of my sins. My mother is the famous *Mellusine*, known throughout all the world for her good deeds, and my father is *Gui de Lusignan*." "Ah, my dear nephew," cried the girl's father, "never will I take the life of the last male scion of my Family, for I am a Lusignan as you are. I am your uncle *Alain de Lusignan*; and behold your own cousin, miserably dying."

They went back into the big room, followed by the horse, who showed his master *Raimond* one of the two packets which had fallen from the serpent's skin. Raimond read the label upon it (for this nobleman could read): *"Astringent powder which stops bleeding and makes severed members grow together provided they are joined within six hours of amputation."* Raimond rushed towards his Cousin, took her arm, spread powder upon the two cut surfaces, and joined them together, sprinkling more powder over them; and the arm knit immediately, remaining only a little numb. Raimond looked at the other packet, and found written upon it: *"Revivifying powder to be mixed with goats' milk, for drinking and for bathing rejoined members, the which it will consolidate in one hour."* Immediately Raimond asked for some goats' milk, put the powder in it and made his cousin swallow the mixture. The lovely *Raimonde* (for she bore the same name as her Cousin) had no sooner drunk than she threw her two arms round her cousin's neck, saying: "How I love you! How dear you are to me!" and she kissed him. "You have cured me," she went on, "of the philter which bound me to the Wretch whom you saw in a serpent's skin, and whom, dying, I still tried to save. Now go and look for him in the closet of which this is the key, and bring him before my parents, that they may recognise him. He is my Seducer, and bewitched me under pretext of teaching me the sciences; for I was given a tutor because of my supposed intelligence. It seems that you have found his charm. Ha! may it stay for ever in the hands of my dear cousin Raimond." Raimond went to the closet indicated by the number on the key, and there found the little black Man and brought him before the Company. "Ha!" said Alain, "it is Ebrard, my kennel-boy! So the wretch can read!" But Ebrard had no sooner seen the goats' milk than he threw himself upon it and drank of it before any could prevent him. He was immediately transformed into a handsome young man. Raimonde, who was holding Raimond's hand, let go of it and flung herself into the arms of Ebrard exclaiming: "My only love! Ah! I could not have betrayed you." "There is a spell upon this drink," said Raimond, "but I defy the Devil!" And he drank all the rest of the goats' milk in which was the powder. But he was not transformed; he only felt stronger. He seized Ebrard by an arm, and lifted him like a fly, saying to Raimonde: "How can you love a man, lady, who cannot defend himself?" Raimonde turned pale for, while he was speaking, Ebrard changed again and became ugly and hateful to her, because he was not touching the ground. But when Raimond put him down, he became beautiful again, and was again loved; having noticed this, Raimond hung him up with cords passed under his arms and thighs, and so he remained ugly and hateful, such as he was, and was meant to be.

Count Alain seeing his daughter twice healed, gave her in marriage to his nephew, who found that she had not lost her honour during her enchantment. And every day after dinner he took her to see Ebrard hanging in the air; but at that time only, for he was kind enough to let the little man down when he was shut up alone.

But a day came when Raimond had to go into the country. He had been married three years, and had three children and his wife loved him tenderly. On the third day he came back earlier than was expected; for he had been diligent. He entered the house by the orchard gate, and so softly that no one heard him. He climbed a little stairway quietly and came, without having been seen, to the door of his wife's room, and could hear her talking. Gently opening one side of the door, he peeped in, and saw Raimonde sitting upon a couch with Ebrard, who was caressing her, and whose caresses she was more than repaying. Transported with anger, Raimond drew his sword, opened the door and entered the room; but he saw nobody. He ran to Ebrard's room and found him hanging from the ceiling. "I was mistaken," thought Raimond, "it is an effect of jealousy, for he who marries a girl who has made love with another poisons his own marriage." He then went into his wife's room and found her sitting quietly at needlework with her maids. "I have been looking for you, Madam," he said, "as I did not see you here when I first came in." "But I was here," she said to him. "Yet I did not see you." "I was certainly here. Ask Bertille." "I take your word before anyone's, my dear," replied Raimond, but he did not like that *ask Bertille*, for he felt her to be guilty. And he determined to ensure his peace for life, by taking the first occasion to discover the truth.

Courtcou, as was his custom when he told me stories, stopped there. I could make up an ending, but prefer to keep scrupulously to fact. The shepherd did not finish the story, so that my curiosity might remain unsatisfied and make me go with him into the fields another day; but by chance it was never finished.

The first occasion on which we found ourselves free, for my mother prevented our being together, Pierre told me another tale; that obscene story which I have somewhat toned down to place it at the end of the *Confidence Nécessaire*. Then he told me a fifth one, that of *Mellusine,* which I used in *O. Ribaud*; then a sixth, which occurs in the same work, and which has since seemed to me an imitation of the Greek tale of Circe. I inserted other shorter ones in the thirty-first volume of the *Contemporaines*. He told me the story of *Les Fils ingrats,* of which Piron made use, while I have not yet done so. Finally he ventured on a story, and it was the last, which was less a tale than something which happened to himself; and this should have made me know and distrust him; but I had too little experience. Alas, I had one quality which turned to the harm of myself and of my family; I was very discreet. Had I had the opposite defect I should have forestalled an attempt upon a blood-relation; an attempt which doubtless eventually caused her death.

CHRISTINE

"When I was shepherd to M. Gouneaux at Coutarnoux, there were three daughters at home. The two elder ones were very pretty; but the eldest, who was called Amable, was proud and scorned me; the second, named Dorothée, was kind but had no liking for a frolic. But Christine, the youngest, was a knowing little thing, always dancing, always playful; she would come ten times a day to tease me. However, she was scarcely twelve or thirteen years old and was destined to become a nun, a fact which she knew very well. Also she would say to me sometimes: 'Courtcou, I would rather my father gave me to a shepherd or even to a cowherd than go into a nunnery.' 'Well, Mademoiselle Christine,' I would answer, 'you must become my wife; and if you like, you shall by and bye.' 'I do like,' she said one day, laughing like a little mad thing. And so, every day after that, I snatched moments to play and jest with her on the sly; for she was watched. We sought opportunities to be quite alone, for she did not dare to come to my sheep-stable as did her sisters. One day, she said to her sister Dorothée: 'I do so want that renegade Courtcou to carry me astride his shoulders; it is my whim, but I dare not gratify it alone. So, dear sister, do let me have what I want, I entreat you. For once I am in a convent, I shall have plenty of time for not being able to do anything I like.' Dorothée let herself be persuaded, only saying that they must take good care not to be seen by Amable, their eldest sister. 'In that case, dear sister,' said Christine, 'you go and keep watch.' Dorothée went away to do so, and Christine climbed on to my shoulders, a bare thigh on either side, which I held with my hands.

Then she said very loud: 'Courtcou, I wager that you cannot carry me like this up to the straw-loft above your sheep!' 'Lord, yes! Mademoiselle Christine,' I answered, 'and bring you down again without a rest.' So I carried her up into the straw-loft and when we were there Christine kissed me. . . ."

"And then?" I asked. "I musn't tell." "Ah! yes, you must! do tell me!" (And the thought of my own two adventures made me all the more eager for details.) "I have something to tell you too if you will not hide anything from me." Then Courtcou, who only wanted to be pressed, described the most lascivious scene. "How strange you are!" I said; none the less his revolting talk gave me a taste for his aberrations. (*Mastuprarat, fellaverat, mammaverat, tandem futuerat ingentibus conatibus*; *postea pluries vitiatam puellam irrumarat.*) He continued:

When I returned with Christine I found her sister Dorothée very angry. "I vow I would never have consented to your freak, sister, if I had foreseen that you would be so long!" After this first time, Christine found means to slip away to my stable or to the loft every day; and one evening her sisters forgot to lock her in and, seizing the opportunity, she came to me on my miserable bed. Ah! how I tumbled her. . . . I had to carry her back, for she could not stand upright I had so harassed her. Unfortunately the dogs began to bark, and when they recognised me, it was still worse, for then their welcome was even noisier. I put my . . . bed-fellow down at her door; but I was seen in the courtyard, which led me to prepare an excuse by climbing on to the dungheap. . . . That little affair lasted another six weeks.

But one morning my master came into the sheep stable, and said: "Here are your wages, and get out! If, in an hour, I find you in Coutarnoux . . ." I did not know what to say; I thought it was because the wolf had eaten two or three sheep and he imagined I had been selling them to the butcher of the Isle-sous-Mauréal; a thing I had not done. I took my wages, packed my bundle and left. But a kind of suspicion made me take to the woods instead of going by the usual way, so that I followed the road at a distance of twenty or thirty paces. And near the outskirts of Soulangis I caught a glimpse of my master and his two sons, each with a gun on his shoulder. The three dogs ran to me, but luckily without barking. My heart beating, I tied them to a tree, as I was in the habit of doing; then hurled myself into a thicket, from which I heard the men saying to each other: "Where the devil can he have gone?" "My sister!" exclaimed the eldest. "Oh! Christine!" "She is going to have a child," said the younger. "Be quiet!" interrupted his brother angrily. That was enough for me. I let them run about looking for me and, when I had untied the dogs, plunged deeper into the woods. And the less I became afraid of meeting them, the more I rejoiced at what I had heard. "Ah! so you will have a little Courtcou in your family, Messieurs Proudfarts," I said to myself. "Well, well, I feel happier than I could have believed possible; and the devil take the hindmost!" I did not go to Nitry but to Noyers, and from there I came to you, because it is a remote place, where they will not find me. And anyhow I keep an eye on all gentlemen in red cloaks who pass on horseback, and take care not to be by the roadside for fear of accident."

Such was Courtcou's tale. I shall not relate all he told me in our daily conversations, but this good-for-nothing corrupted my heart, in spite of all my mother's precautions. I will only add that, when he was acquainted with our village girls, he talked incessantly of the filthy desires they suggested, and that his obscene conversation influenced my character and temperament, directing all my thoughts, and consequently all my energy, towards physical love.

Courtcou had no idea that I could have the same kind of confidences to impart; but I had promised him a story if he would hide nothing of what he did with Christine and he often urged me to keep my promise and was cross with me for my delay. I turned storyteller for the first time at his solicitation: I arranged my two adventures with Nannette and Julie in my head, and then related them. He was lost in admiration, and said they were better than his own. I was as flattered as though he really meant it, for of course he did not think this. However I saw desire and envy blend upon his hideous face; and then he resembled those unclean spirits devoured in the eternal fires, who it is said find refreshment in the crimes of man. As Courtcou had not seen Nannette, and her physique as I described it was very much like that of Ursule Lamas, he weltered in obscene inventions adapted to the fair Nitriote's charms; he lusted to ravish her, and all his loathsome pleasures started from this supposition. Cries and tears and anguish; he made me shudder! But my nature was gentle and affectionate and this preserved me from some of the harm he might have done me.

Ever since his arrival, Pierre had been brooding over an evil design, and one day when we were in the pastures, he began to sound me, skirting round the subject with a hundred vague suggestions. "Would you not love to have this girl; or would you not like to have that? Marie Fouard? Or Edmée Boissard? Oh! we should have to invent something really frightful for her! . . . Can you write a letter?" I replied that my father had told me that a letter was just writing what one would have said in conversation, with this difference that, as the mind was undisturbed, a letter is more consecutive and exact. "In that case, you could make out a contract." "What do you mean?" "A written agreement . . . as other shepherds do. Ah! if I could write, it would have been done long ago. . . . I should have *pacted* and I should have everything I desire!" "What is a pact?" "A pact? . . . it is the contract you make . . ." "With the Devil?" "It is an agreement you make with him for what you want; all you have to do is to be very careful to keep your side of it, even though it seems a trifle. He cannot hurt the man, and is obliged to obey him absolutely. When a pact is made, man is master of his circumstances – God has willed it so – but it must be kept! Some people are silly enough to think that they have to give their soul to the Devil, and they do this; and so when they break their pact, he wrings their necks to get the soul: or more often, has them killed by pacted robbers, or makes them die a sudden death. You know (for I have told you so often) that the Devil is not as bad as he is painted; he keeps his promises faithfully and will never fail you, for he cannot; he will only hurt you if you play him false. Well then, let us make a fine pact with the Devil, who will get us everything we want on very easy conditions: such as putting your finger to your lips or into your ear, on any day you like, once a year, etc." I was so astonished that I could not answer. "Listen," continued Courtcou, "before making the pact, we must see him, and then, if we are pleased with his answers, we will go on with it. I am quite sure that, with his help, we can have anyone here by saying two words; any girl who has already *fallen*, that is, like Nannette, Julie, Christine, or *la Cormonote* of Vaudupuis, who has had a child since her husband's death. We could also have Edmée Boissard, Ursule Lamas, your Marie Fouard, Madeleine Champaut, and all the pretty girls by proxy; the Devil will bring the young and pretty damned from hell and make these resemble them feature for feature, and we shall have done a kind deed by procuring a moment's happiness in their eternal torment for these poor wretches." "Oh, but how could one look at the Devil!" I exclaimed, trembling with horror; though I must confess the proposal pricked my curiosity and gratified some other passions, so that my fear of the compact was diminishing. . . . "We can do so, but only if we are not afraid of him; that makes him bold and wicked. I have heard a recipe or conjuration read from the *Livre des Bergers*, but how can we get the book? You have it in the house, if I am not mistaken, for your brother Boujat was handling one just like it the other day; I recognised it by the pictures. Each month in the year is represented with its attributes: May carries a beautiful young girl crowned with flowers behind him on his horse. There are pictures of processions, ceremonies, apparitions. Try to get hold of it; you can read it straight through to me and I shall recognise the conjuration and perform it." I asked my sister Margot for the book, and got it without difficulty.

I hurried to Courtcou at once and read it to him, and, following the account of the raising of Lazarus and of all that he had seen during his stay in the other world, we did in fact find a way of summoning the Devil, which Courtcou assured me was the same that shepherds used.

Conjuration.

HOW A SHEPHERD MUST CONJURE THE DEVIL TO SPEAK TO HIM FACE TO FACE

First kill a black cat (we had a very fine one), a black hen, a black yearling lamb, a crow, a magpie, and a blackbird, and cast the spell with their mingled blood in a lonely place. + Burn the entrails, the feet, the heads, the skins, or the feathers, except the skin of the black cat; and throw a pinch of the ashes to the four quarters of the winds, saying "*Spirit that breathes, breathe upon me!*" + Gather up the rest of the ashes and make an infusion in four quarts of white wine. + In a dark room, or better still in a deserted house, grill or cook among the embers the flesh of the animals, excepting the black lamb, which is to be left whole in the deserted place, for the Devil's portion. + While the flesh is cooking and the room is full of smoke, set before you a bucket filled with water, so clear that the bottom may be seen. + Looking into it and eating nothing, drink two quarts of the white wine infused with the ashes. + Hang a lamp from the ceiling above the bucket, the which shall cast a shadow on the water and light around it. + And look into the water through the skin of the black cat after the last glass of the two quarts is drunk. + Then the Devil will infallibly appear. You will speak, he will reply. + And if there be two of whom one has not drunk, he shall hear but shall not see."

Courtcou adroitly took advantage of this last circumstance; he knew I should not be able to finish even the first glass of wine. He therefore fulfilled the conditions as nearly as possible. He killed my mother's beautiful black cat, a fine hen, a handsome black lamb, which François, who brought us the crow, the magpie and the blackbird, doubtless had as the Devil's portion. Pierre cast the spell alone, and during the operation, in which François had no part save to skin and pluck, I kept watch over the flock for fear of wolves. When all was finished, they called me. We ate the fowl cooked under the fire between two stones, in precisely the same manner as, according to Captain Cook, the savages of the South roast whole pigs, and of which dishonest shepherds have always made use at

Nitry; the wolf is blamed for having devoured what the shepherds eat among themselves. . . . Courtcou assured me that he was eating the flesh of the cat and of the four birds, and there was no reason for disbelieving him. All this took place at the edge of the Nitry woods, on the highest point of a very high hill, called *Triomfraid*, because this place is exposed to all the winds and cold is triumphant there. Courtcou completed the ceremonial that very evening, in an old deserted barn which belonged to la Bretonne. I provided the wine; he put the ashes into it, after having thrown a pinch to the four winds, and drank off the two quarts which made him drunk. He took out the straw with which he had stuffed the cat's skin to dry it, and made a sort of ephod or head-piece through which to look into the bucket. Trembling and ready to fly if the devil was too ugly, I awaited the result at the door of the tumble-down barn. Courtcou swore that he saw the devil at the bottom of the bucket, and stammering and hiccoughing urged me to come and look; but I could not summon up enough resolution. He questioned the Devil, peering and speaking through the black cat's skin, and I heard a rumbling arrogant voice reply. As I did not follow everything very well at the time, I can only remember that Pierre asked a great many stupid questions and that the Devil's answers seemed to come from the pit of his stomach, which so terrified me that I would not write out the pact, although I had brought paper and my inkhorn from school. Courtcou kept on urging me to write a pact, saying that it would put the Devil at our disposition, and under better terms than those of which he had spoken; namely (and this will show the depths of the scoundrel's wickedness) that, in exchange for every service rendered us by the Devil, we should incite some other person, whether child or grown-up, girl or boy, to commit a mortal sin of lust or greed. Such was the coin with which we were to pay him. Courtcou was angry with me and said he would tell me no more stories. Then he softened, in spite of his drunkenness, and boasted of the prerogatives which he would enjoy alone. He made the Devil tell them over, speaking himself as do ventriloquists; one could have sworn that another person was replying. He must have acquired these accomplishments among the beggars whom he had frequented when a child. He made himself tell over the things he would be able to obtain. They were as singular and extravagant as his own disordered imagination, now exalted by drink; but nothing could move me; I was afraid of the Devil and had a horror of drunkenness. Nevertheless I think that in the end the wretch would have succeeded in making me write out the compact (which he repeated in a loud voice, the Devil then promising him wonder upon wonder) because I loved stories, and he would not tell me any for the two following days; he began some strange ones, but stopped immediately.

But during this interval of doubt, it occurred to him to join us for "wolf" in the meadow; Marie Fouard, and Madelon Piôt were there. I was the first wolf; Courtcou let himself be caught and begged me in a whisper to guess him. So I called out his name and bandaged his eyes. Marie and Madelon, just the two he wanted, did not care to play with a stranger, but some others were less scrupulous, and one of them, grievously insulted, uttered cries which brought the game to an end. However, shame kept the young girl from complaining, and it was only on the day following, a Sunday, that I learnt from Courtcou himself what he had done.

Germain, the ploughboy, who was sleeping in a retired place, was awakened by our chatter, and he not only heard the shepherd's confession, but his reiterated demands that I should write the pact; and it was this last absurdity which made him most indignant. The faithful servant meant to speak to my father but actually he went to my mother. Courtcou was a good enough shepherd; he understood the diseases of sheep, and kept them in good condition; they regretted having to get rid of him. And because they thought that I was the only person he could corrupt, and because my father was vexed to see that I was developing an ugly and illegible handwriting, it was decided to carry out a plan which had been formed after my return from Joux, and put me under the Abbé Thomas, who was then master of the choir-boys at Bicêtre. This they thought would be in every way a satisfactory compromise, but they learnt, alas! by distressing experience, that there is nothing for it but to kill the venomous beast and the mad dog, whose mouths distil poison. One of my father's daughters was young, innocent and pretty, and had a nature that was bold yet simple, in perfect contrast to my own. Her Courtcou attacked, with all the cunning and address of which he was capable; he enticed her into places where they were alone together and with obscene caresses sought to evoke a pleasing sensation in her. He discovered what she liked and, from that moment, she gave him all that her extreme youth permitted. At last they were surprised together, and my mother, horrified at having thus exposed her children, dismissed Courtcou one Saturday. Germain watched the flocks on Sunday, while Simon Droin, his comrade, went to my Aunt Merrat at Accolay, to look for a shepherd of good character. My aunt gave him a boy named Larivière, who had neither the faults nor the qualities of Courtcou.

On the 28th of August, the eve of the patronal festival at Sacy, M. Jean Restif* arrived in fulfilment of his promise. My father went as far as Nitry

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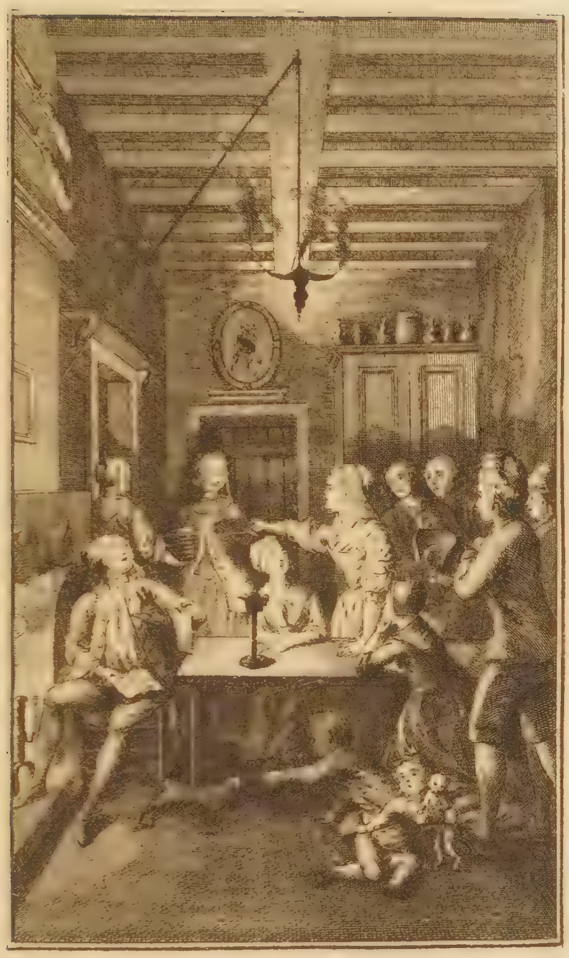
*At the beginning of the third edition of the *Vie de Mon Père*, I have quoted two letters from his grandson, tax collector at Grenoble, whose uncle, Jean Restif's son, lived at Vienne in Dauphiné. If J. Restif died in 1743, his visit to us must have occurred earlier.

to meet him, alone, although I had asked to go with him and he had at first promised to take me. Jean Restif had his own chaise for he was very well to do. I was curious to see this much respected and strictly virtuous man, of whom my father never tired of speaking because of the gratitude he owed him. He was more than simply dressed, in an old grey cloth coat, and shoes which were slit because of corns; he walked with difficulty. I observed all this while taking him by a short cut to the church, as he had requested of my father. When we were alone, he began to question me. "Well, little cousin, what books have you read?" "The Bible, Monsieur l'Avocat, and my father reads it to us every evening also." "And what has struck you in it?" "Oh, the creation of the world, and how Adam sinned, tempted by Eve, who had been tempted by the wicked serpent that could talk; and how they were driven from the earthly paradise. And then there is Cain, who killed his brother Abel, and then the Flood. Oh, I like the dove that Noah sent out twice and who came back the second time with a green branch in his beak! And then there is Shem, and then Abraham who was going to sacrifice his son Isaac, only the angel held his arm." "And what did you notice about the behaviour of sons towards their fathers in the Bible?" "That all good sons, such as Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, honoured their fathers as my father honours his father, Pierre Restif; and that all bad sons, such as Shem, Esau, and nearly all the sons of Jacob, do not honour their fathers, and cause them pain." "You have answered well. And what did you notice after that?" "Moses and the burning bush, from which God spoke to him and, my father says, announced his true name; the plagues of Egypt, and how wicked Pharaoh was, only it was God who had hardened his heart; and how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea; and how they ate manna in the desert; and how they



made a golden calf and how God punished them." "You have an excellent memory, and it would be unpardonable if you did not take advantage of it. What do you hope to become? What position would you like to fill – that is, within the means of your parents?" This question was beyond me. I was acquainted with only a few kinds of employment: farmer, vine tender, priest, schoolmaster or surgeon; for such professions as notary, judge, attorney did not exist in Sacy; they were practised by some among the husbandmen (a sound principle, not applicable, unfortunately, to towns). I answered that I did not know, but that I should very much like to be a shepherd. Jean Restif smiled, and told me about the professions which exist only in towns, but I did not understand. Then he made me reason with him, to test the compass of my wit, the correctness of my judgment and my natural good sense. "What are your ideas upon the duties we owe to others, and what they owe to us, and upon how we should behave towards them? Have you ever thought about that?" "No, Monsieur l'Avocat." "Well then, what do you think about it now?" "What do I think about it? Why nothing. . . ." "What, nothing? . . . You do not know what you want people to do for you?" "Oh, yes indeed, Monsieur l'Avocat. I would like them to give me all the pleasures I want; I would like never to be corrected except kindly; I would like to be given everything I ask for." "That I can well believe! But others want the same thing. If you want them to like you, to be nice to you, you must do the same by them. The wise man makes the first advance." "Oh, you are right, Monsieur l'Avocat, and that is what I have done with my friends for a long time now; because I was naughty once, when I was quite little, and they paid me back every bit of what I did to hurt them: I pinched them, they pinched me; I spat in their faces, they spat back. Then I thought of giving them some of my sweets;

everyone gave me some of theirs; and now I always try to be nice to people first, so that they shall be nice to me and really enjoy doing it." "Then why, when I first asked, did you say that you did not know?" "Because I did not understand what you meant." "A very good answer. My child, throughout your life, remember to do good to others so that they may do good to you. Do you like learning, in order to know things?" "Oh, yes!" I replied. "I want to know everything: what will happen . . . in a year; to fly in the air; all the stories in the world." "Ah-ha, so you like stories?" "They are so lovely. . . . I am so happy while I am listening to them." "But do you want to learn useful things, such as commerce; or to be able to decide who is right or wrong in a law-suit; or to understand the arts – painting, and sculpture; or the sciences, such as computation, mechanics, geography, geometry; or how to measure land as a surveyor?" "I do not know." "In fact you do not know enough to understand me; knowledge must precede desire, and you know nothing of these things. Do you understand that natural truth: *There is no desire without knowledge?"* And as I did not reply, he continued: "For instance, you love stories, but before you had heard the first one, you did not long for them as you do now, because you did not know what they were like." "Yes, yes! Now I understand you. Before I had seen Edmée Boissard I never thought of her, not a little bit." J. Restif smiled: "I see that you understand me."* Just then we found ourselves at the church door, and I ran to the stoup to offer the holy water.

**Quod latet, ignotum est; ignoti nulla cupido:*
Fructus abest, virtus cum sacra teste caret.
Tu licet Thamyran superas atque Orphea cantu,
Non est ignotæ gratia magna lyræ:
Si Venerem Cous nunquam pinxisset Apelles,
Mersa sub æquoreis illa lateret aquis.
(Ov. 3 *de Arte*, v., 397.)

On the return journey, my father walked with his honoured relative, and I, without ulterior motive, walked just behind them, and overheard something of their conversation. I will faithfully retail the little of it that I now remember.

"Well, worthy cousin?" said my father. "I will tell you what I think . . ." but, at this moment, J. Restif turned round and, noticing me, spoke in an undertone. "But," said my father by and bye, "what do you think? Shall I make a farmer of him?" "No." That fatal word decided my future lot: that *no*, which was prompted by kindness, and yet has brought so much misfortune to me, still reverberates in my heart. After this word, he continued: "This child has much in common with his eldest brother, but they have no more the same character than they have the same mother; these two children resemble each other in all that they derive from the Restifs; but in what they derive from their mothers, they differ prodigiously!" And he repeated: "*Prodigiously!* The other has succeeded and everyone esteems him, I know it; but for this one, I dare not promise the same esteem." "What!" exclaimed my father. "Have you seen any tendency to vice in him?" "No, but he must not follow the same calling as his brother. He likes women; that in itself is not a vice, but it is an inclination that may always become one – like poverty, which is no vice and yet keeps the poor always on the brink of knavery. A wise man, by being careful, can avoid poverty; but to regulate the taste for women requires an experience which always comes too late." "I will have him taught," said my father, "and then we shall see what is best to make of him. For you can assure me that his mind is fitted for study?" "I can assure you of it."

That was all I could hear of their conversation. I hardly understood it then, but it has come back to me since as I have here reported it.

Next day I had to go out with Larivière, who did not know the pastures. His only conversation was of how they stacked the wood to go to Paris, of the dangers from the river and the holes in the river, and of fishing, etc. My mother's nephew, Jean Merrat, was his hero, and he told me astonishing tales of his fishing exploits. He would dive into the holes formed in small rivers by the swirl of the current; stay under water for a long time, and catch large fish in the crevices of the rocks; then tie them to his leg, and come to the surface with his catch. As a matter of fact Jean and his mother and his sister used to bring us fish several times a year; it always meant a treat for us children when Aunt Merrat or cousin Babet came to see us. One day Jean brought us a salmon, which had followed the salt boats up as far as Cravant. My father sent off the fine fish at once to M. Restif the lawyer, with this note. *"I am sending you this salmon which was caught at Cravant. If Pierre had still been alive I should have divided it between you. But he is dead, and so it is all yours."* Jean Restif replied: *"Edme, dear friend and cousin, it was with pleasure and more than pleasure that I received the fish, so rare in these parts. I am inviting our good friends and relatives of Noyers to the feast, and, could you be there also, nothing would then be lacking. Set out at once and come to supper with us; for if you are not here to represent Pierre we shall all regret it, and myself more than any. . . ."* Geneviève, the pedlar, was returning to Noyers with her big pock-marked Comtois, when my father received this invitation. She took back his reply. *"Most honoured cousin; Pierre cannot be represented. I have neither the merit nor the capacity; but I am very grateful for your kindness. . . ."* To continue.

In the meantime the Abbé Thomas, in response to my father's request and on the advice of my eldest brother, had consented to have me with him. My father would have taken me to Paris before the vintage, if Larivière had not deserted the flocks; so that I again became a shepherd. I was older, and understood my work better; and the flock had never been so fine. I returned to reign in my valley, but the old rapture had departed, for my mind was no longer at peace. Instead of living under the spell of the present as in the previous year, I would travel back into the past and, in imagination, retrace all that had happened in the last thirteen months. From my hills I could descry Joux, and the memory of Julie Barbier – her charms, her virtues, and her friendship for me, plunged me into a profound melancholy. To be so near to this amiable girl and yet not dare to visit her! Like Socrates, I have always had a secret monitor, who shielded me from perils of which I was utterly unaware; unknown to everybody save her father and step-mother, Julie Barbier had just become a mother. Another matter which disquieted me was that I daily heard my father and mother discuss their plan of sending me to Paris, to be with my second brother, the Abbé Thomas. All this disturbed my peace of mind and poisoned my pleasures. I was no longer alone, for these troubling thoughts followed me everywhere, even into my dear valley, and lifted the spell from all that had enchanted me in the preceding year. Nevertheless I restored my pyramids (futile labour, man's work in emblem!) and, as though by some presentiment, said farewell to that loved solitude.

It was the same day as that on which in 1745 I had left home to become a boarder in Joux. In the evening I saw a girl in the house, who was to be the new shepherd, and next morning Marie Coquolly went out alone to the pastures. At eleven o'clock Marguerite Pâris, housekeeper to my brother the curé of Courgis, arrived on her ass with a letter from the Abbé Thomas fixing the date of my departure. I looked upon her as a calamity . . . and I see now that I was not mistaken.

Reader! The happiest days of my life are over. As innocence departs, pure joy goes with her. A new Icarus, and as rash as he, I go to affront my dangers!

> *Quid fuit ut tutus agitarit Dædalus alas,*
> *Icarus immensas nomine signet aquas?*
> *Nempe quod hic alte, demissius ille volabat;*
> *Nam pennas ambo non habuere suas.*
>
> OVID, III. *Trist.* el. 4, v. 31.

END OF THE FIRST EPOCH

AND

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME IN RESTIF'S EDITION

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR

FOR THIS VOLUME

1. THE HAND IN THE FIRE

Little Monsieur Nicolas putting his hand in the fire to save his mother from suffering. Barbe Ferlet is running to him; Edme Restif and grandfather Nicolas Ferlet are still at breakfast. [*page 95*]

2. BABY, BABY, KISSED BY THE GIRLS!

Monsieur Nicolas in the middle of a band of young girls: Reine Miné, Jeanne Champeaux, Agathe Tilhien, Madeleine Blondin, Marie Menant, Marthe Berault, Marthe Belin, Lorote Cornevin, in a word, all the marriageable girls, who laughingly comfort him for the jeers of the big boys. [*page 111*]

3. THE MULE STABLE OR FIRST PROOF OF MANHOOD

Monsieur Nicolas being kissed by Nannette and courageously throwing his arms about the neck of this pretty girl, etc. [*page 124*]

4. THE VALLEY

Monsieur Nicolas in his kingdom, offering a bird of prey as a holocaust, in the presence of Marie Fouard, Madelein Piôt, Etienne Dumont, etc. On the left, the four herds are seen grazing, with the three dogs, Pinçard, Friquette and Babillard, tied near them; on the right, at the edge of a wood, a hare, a deer, a wild boar covering a sow, and a wolf; and, on the big pear trees, a hoopoe and some quarrelling magpies. [*page 150*]

5. JULIE BARBIER, OR THE SCHOOL AT JOUX

Monsieur Nicolas with the fever, being coddled and caressed by Julie, who is alone with him in the class room, etc. [*page 175*]

6. THE PATRONAL FESTIVAL OF NITRY

Monsieur Nicolas escorted by his Aunt Madelon, walking in the middle of all the beauties of the town, Ursule, Edmée, etc. [*page 193*]

SECOND EPOCH

IN WHICH
I AM A
CHOIR BOY

1746-1747

SECOND EPOCH

In which I am a Choir Boy

1746 – 1747

Felices quibus usus adest! Ego nescia rerum
Difficilem culpæ suspicor esse viam.
Ovid, *ep. Helen. Paridi.*

BICÊTRE is a hospital, the dishonoured name of which strikes disagreeably on the ear. Of my two stepbrothers, the elder, as we have heard, had been a priest for some five years and, for the last two or three of them, curé of Courgis, a village one league from Chablis and three from Auxerre. My other brother, a simple clerk, had gone to Paris as a tutor after leaving the seminary. He found a place in a Jansenist household, but he could not endure the father's interference or the mother's pettiness, or the spoilt caprices of their child, so he left these people.

One day, while he was at the house of his sister Marie, he saw one of those pious adventurers whose sleek, shining heads proclaim hypocrisy. The Abbé felt drawn to him. "Assuredly he is a good man!" he said to Marie. "He goes down our street every week." The Abbé watched for his return and saluted him. Seeing hair as sleek and shining as his own, Fusier smiled, all fawning piety. "You know me, Brother?" "I recognise your piety, and salute it. Enter, man of God!" Fusier entered. Imagine a big, handsome Norman about six feet in height with a face wreathed in sanctimonious smiles; a respectable belly, scarlet cheeks, large, half-closed eyes, and a reek of canting piety; eating largely, drinking deeply, sleeping like an idiot; dressed expensively, and talking of nothing but penitence and mortification. He was a charlatan. He ogled Marie as she took his cloak (beneath which was a wallet) and invited him to stay to dinner. While the table was being set in the best room, the Abbé Thomas introduced himself as a pupil of M. de Caylus (at this Fusier leapt upon his neck) and briefly recounted his experiences as a tutor. . . . Fusier was master of the choir boys at Bicêtre, but his vast capacity had enlarged the concern and, from six or eight little red-capped shavelings, he had developed a boarding school of some fifty children, drawn, for the most part, from good class Parisian or provincial families. These were dressed in cassocks and, seated in the stalls below the priests, assisted at office in hood and surplice. Having formed the school, Fusier directed it. He had made himself very useful to the institution by begging for it; and, with his wallet, had been able to rebuild the house of the Lord, in which he had just installed an organ. Dinner was served. When he had seen all the simple good-nature of the Abbé Thomas and of his sister and brother-in-law, he told them that he needed an assistant master, and took the Abbé away with him. But in spite of all that he had done for the place, Fusier, who was just a schemer using piety as a cloak for intrigue, had finally to take himself off, and the ex-tutor, poor, virtuous, and disinterested, inherited the spoils, except for the wallet. It was after this that the Abbé Thomas decided that he could have me with him.

My father and mother were convinced that I was intelligent, and good-hearted; and had no doubt but that I should preserve my innocence when the time came for me to live in towns. They hoped that I should get on, and, as the eldest child of the second marriage, they felt that nothing must be neglected to make of me a protector for the younger children. To return to Marguerite.

The vintage was over, but my father was busy for the rest of that day. I was handed over to the good housekeeper on Tuesday, the 15th of October; my father was to join me at Courgis next day, to dine and then take me to Auxerre for the night. From thence we were to proceed by boat on Thursday morning. On the way to Courgis I very much enjoyed seeing Laloge, Bois-Labbé and Courtenay; Vaux Germains, originally held in metayage by the Auxerre Benedictines; Metairie-Rouge or Charmelieu – a charmed spot indeed to anyone with my taste for wild nature – Puitsdebond, Croix-Pilate, Saint-Cyr and Préhy; for all these villages were well-known in Sacy, and I had often heard them mentioned in the stories told to me. We arrived at close of day, but I did not see my brother till supper time; he made it a rule, which I have since myself adopted, never to let idle visits interfere with his work. We know how frightened I was of him, but he was considerate enough to greet me with smiling gentleness. After supper we went to visit good Monsieur Foynat, chaplain to the Seigneur Baron de Courgis. Marguerite followed after us. A young lady from Chablis of the name of Courtives, was with the chaplain at the time, and also a Sister Pilon, a devout churchwoman, with her servant. All the three rose with modestly lowered eyes on the entry of M. le Curé. The chaplain embraced me smiling, and I loved him at first glance: candour and indulgence were written in his face. He belonged to an older time, and was a good man as my mother and Aunt Madelon were good women.

The chaplain began to question me on my pursuits and reading. I told him that I had read the Lives of the Saints. "And can you remember anything about it?" Without hesitation I enumerated the various torments endured by all those martyrs who are commemorated during the year. " What a prodigious memory!" said M. Foynat to my brother. "And what else have you read?" "The Bible, M. le Chapelain." "The Bible? The abridged version of the *Old Testament?*" "No, the Bible, M. le Chapelain; beginning with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua; and then Judges and then Ruth and then Job and then Tobias, and then Judith, and then Esther, and then the Psalms; and then the books of wisdom: Proverbs, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Songs; and then the prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel; and then the twelve minor prophets: Hosea, Amos, Joel . . ." "He is going to enumerate them!" exclaimed the worthy chaplain. "And what struck you in Genesis?" "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.*" And I recited the whole of the first chapter. Tears of joy were in my brother's eyes, and the chaplain was enraptured. "He has learnt well!" he said to my brother. "Was he under Messire Foudriat?" "He? He has not been under anyone except my father; he watched the sheep." At these words the chaplain embraced me, saying: "What a talent! Have you read any other book, little friend?" "Yes, M. le Chapelain, the *Bon Pasteur* of the Blessed Dom Jean de Palafox, bishop of Osma." "I do not know that book," he said to my brother. "Oh, it's well enough, but its piety has the Spanish flavour." "Monsieur Nicolas, I would like some idea of this book. Can you quote any of it?"

"One Christmas Eve a good priest fell asleep while waiting for Matins . . ." and I recited the whole book word by word without hesitation, as though I had learnt it by heart. Neither the chaplain nor the curé interrupted me. My brother, who was wont to chastise me severely whenever he came to see my parents, did not recognise me; for he had got a wrong impression of me through my step-sisters; and even from my mother who, so as not to show favour, never contradicted anything these young women, her step-daughters, said about me. Though little given to admiration, he was surprised equally by my memory and my intelligence. The chaplain turned to the four devout women: "Well, Sisters?" "If he is humble, he will one day be a saint," said Mlle de Courtives. "*If* . . ." whispered Marguerite to herself, smiling. The two other women modestly affirmed their certainty that I would be humble. "He does not belie his family," continued the chaplain to my brother. "The child will go far if no one stops him." (Alas! did this good and upright old man have a presentiment?)

Next morning my brother confessed me; I do not know whether it was merely to practise his trade as a priest. My father arrived towards midday and was filled with joy by my brother, and still more so by the good chaplain, who talked to him for a long time in private. I saw that he looked at me with that paternal pride, the sweetness of which is unknown to poor celibates. We left Courgis about three o'clock, the curé and the chaplain escorting us as far as Montalery, where they left us.

We continued our journey gaily. At the sight of Auxerre, which rises in the form of an amphitheatre upon a hill, I was struck with amazement, for until then I had only seen petty villages. We went on. I had never seen a bridge! Another surprise! I trembled with emotion and with awe. We were going to lodge near the port, and in crossing the town, my father took me past the cathedral, which seemed to me the work of fairies. Saint Christopher terrified me; but it recalled Nitry, Mont-Gré. . . . I was enchanted by the clock and especially by the sphere of months, like that at the Sorbonne in Paris. Everybody seemed well to do, and I commented on this in my own way: "Is every one a gentleman here?" And all the women looked pretty; as is the way of children, I was dazzled by the fine dressing of these puppets. When we got to the inn we found my mother on the quay, escorted by an old friend, M. Chambonnet, who took us to have supper with him. I was so shy that, had I been apart from my mother, I should not have dared to eat.

On Thursday we left by the passenger boat, my father and I; my mother fainted at the moment of parting.

I could not endure the boat for the jolting; the boatmen were constantly using their poles to keep the heavy craft off sandbanks. However I was not without some amusement. We made common table with a Parisian family, and there was one girl of my own age, gentle and polite as are all the daughters of Paris, who did what she could to distract my mind; indeed she put herself out to do so. But I was as seasick as if we had crossed the ocean; and I could not eat: how could I take pleasure in anything? Still my fancy had been stirred by the first sight of my pretty friend's dainty shoes. . . . My father was obliged to leave the boat.

When we had our feet on firm ground again, we went on by cart. But I could not stand its jolting either; I thought I was going to die, and my father had to proceed on foot. He had much to endure from my uncouth caprices! But if he complained, it was with a gentleness that I have often since admired.

On the outskirts of Melun, I thought I was looking over a great plain covered with sheep: but the sheep were small sandstone boulders. Some that lay along our road I took for houses in the distance; the scene intrigued me and I asked my father question on question. He answered with an exposition of certain physical truths concerning the diminution of those rivers which do not rise among the high snow-covered mountains; and how, in the opinion of his father, rivers at first covered the whole bed of the valley through which they flowed. Pierre explained their decrease by the gradual degradation of the mountain and the filling up of the valley. . . . I have made judicious use of these truths in my *Physique.*

We had been following the old road, and as we drew near to the new one, I heard a terrifying noise which seemed to me like the rolling of thunder. "Father, father," I cried, "a band of robbers is coming!" Edme Restif smiled: "It is the coaches going to Fontainebleau that you hear. Apparently the king and his court are there, and the carriages are driving over the stones. For there is only one king in the whole of France and all the people with business go to him." "To talk to him?" "To his ministers who exercise his authority. But that is a little beyond you at present. It is enough for you to know that the king protects all the land of France with armies which are maintained by our taxes." "Against whom, father?" "Against foreigners; the Germans, the English." "And if they came – Sacy, Vermenton, great Auxerre and all the country we have seen would beat them?" "All those put together would fly before well-armed soldiers." I did not understand this very well.

We were to sleep in Ponthierry on the new road, four leagues from Fontainebleau and ten from Paris, where my brother Boujat, the surgeon, who was not yet established in practice, was living. He welcomed us with the greatest delight. My father loved this good fellow as though he had been his own son, and was loved and respected in return. Although I was delighted to see Boujat, I was taken with such a violent attack of shyness here that I refused to eat at table in the house of M. Lebrun, his chief, and it was necessary to bring my food to our room. My father did not once reproach me for this whim, and when Boujat expressed astonishment at his forbearance, I heard him say: "My dear boy, this failing will pass; Nicolas will behave like everybody else if he ever acquires enough distinction to give him confidence; if he does not he will always be unsociable. . . . But what harm then if he keeps out of the way? . . . My cousin Droin of the villages has a son who avoids his fellows in the same way, but in him it is ill-nature and caprice; whereas it is only bashfulness in Nicolas. I have watched him; he has no animus against the people he avoids, but suffers from an unconquerable shyness caused by self-distrust; and this feeling will grow weaker with age and use. Nothing is so pernicious to my mind as useless punishment." I listened to these words with secret pleasure, and they increased my affection for so good a father. And I am convinced that, if Jean Restif had heard him, he would have said: "But Edm'lot, you have some sense after all!" While I was alone, I remembered my wild valley and I wept.

This was on Sunday. On Monday morning Boujat took us about five leagues upon our way. It was the last time I ever saw him: a phrase which will often recur in the course of my story and which I shall never write without sadness. Still so young, there were many who loved me whom I was never to see again.

The outskirts of Paris are charming. I was delighted, or rather astonished, by the beautiful houses which bordered the road on either hand. Their grandeur excited no desire in me; I coveted nothing except perhaps the parks; I would have liked to live in the woods, in the half-wild places, provided that the house was a long way off! I experienced what few men can have felt: the emotions of a savage brought over to France on seeing our beautiful things. If he had a soul and was not one of those automata, of whom we have so many and who have never felt in their lives, all the new things would at first depress him; later he might acquire a taste for them; but his liking would be somewhat mixed, and so far different from that of our fashionable world: if English gardens did not exist, he would invent them, but without our finical trivialities. Ah, if I had seen an English garden at that time, it would have put me in an ecstasy; I could never have left it. . . .* In the same way my eyes opened, not to the beauties which my father thought would strike me, but to those in keeping with my tastes. I would rather have died than enter one of those fine houses; they made me feel small and increased my natural shyness. My father knew that this timidity originated in pride and that no man ever thought himself more fit to command than did I. Had I been born a prince, my haughty spirit would have been admired; and had the reason been known for the unsociability of a little Burgundian peasant going on foot to be a choir boy at Bicêtre, his pride would have roused compassion. Half the time and with certain people, pride, or an acute feeling of my own superiority, was the cause of my unsocial humour; with the well-informed it was due to a sense of inferiority. In either case I did not want to be with people who, rightly or wrongly, looked down on me; and I did not want to owe anything to quality in another, not even toleration; and this last has always revolted me from fools. Had I been better informed, and had I known how

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*No one in the world could have experienced my pleasure in the performance of *Arlequin Sauvage*; for no one ever felt this play as I did, not even the author himself.

to go to America, I should have flown thither – not in search of a fortune, but to live as a savage. This was the only manner of life which would have satisfied me; in me nature had to be forced to the mould of civilisation. People may say as often as they like that man is made for society; I maintain that this is not a universal truth.

At last Boujat left us; my father had been urging him to do so for some time, for fear that a patient might need his help. A young married man of great promise, he died at the age of twenty-six as the result of a fall from a horse. I lost a devoted friend. Oh, had he lived, I should have embraced a different career, and perhaps to-day Europe would have numbered me amongst her greatest naturalists! We only did four leagues after Boujat left us, and stopped at Villejuif, where we had a good enough supper for such temperate travellers, in the house of a worthy couple who sold their wine, and whose guests paid for what they had. I became very intimate with a young girl, the eldest daughter of the house; we played together while our hosts talked with my father, for whom they conceived a great respect. On leaving next morning my father asked for the bill; and the girl, who was about thirteen, said that her parents had told her to ask for *seven sous*. My father said that she must have made a mistake, but she produced a card in her mother's writing. My father was convinced, but wished to leave twelve sous over and above the price as a present for the daughter of the house. She refused them, however, and then my father asked the name of her parents. She said her father was called *Cloud*, and the name has remained in my memory. I had excellent sight, and noticed that some one had scratched out a 2, which would have made 27 sous, a fair price. I asked the kind Hélène in an undertone why she had erased it. "Because, little Burgundian, I want to pay your scot myself," she answered.

"And have breakfast before you go. And say nothing about it to your father. . . . And come and see us when you are in Paris." I do not know why, but I did not feel at all ashamed. We breakfasted, at the instance of the engaging Hélène . . . whom I have never seen since.

As we left Villejuif we descried a huge mass of houses, over which lay a cloud of smoke. I asked my father what it was. "That is Paris. It is a great city! We cannot see the whole of it from here." "Oh! how big Paris is! Father! It is as big as from Vermenton to Sacy and from Sacy to Joux!" "Yes, at least." "Oh, what a lot of people!" "There are so many that no one knows anybody else – not even in the same neighbourhood, not even in the same house." I reflected for a moment; and then beside myself with joy: "Father!" I cried, "I want to live there all my life!" My father smiled at me, and said: "But you do not like people?" "Oh, the people who know me! I feel constrained with them; I am not free. There you say, father, the people do not know each other?" "No." "Then they never greet each other?" "No." "They pay no attention to each other?" "No, no." "They would not pay attention just to me?" "Oh, not the least bit in the world." I shivered with delight: "Let's go! Let's go there!" However we did not go straight to Paris; for my father, finding himself at the gate of Bicêtre, where the Abbé Thomas lived, went in there.

I was not at all shy in this place, for I saw none but unhappy wretches inferior to myself. We visited the church first, and I heard my virtuous father thank God for the end of his journey and pray to him that he would bless me.

At the same time something quite new attracted my attention: thirty children dressed in hood and cassock entered together. I looked at them with amazement, and exclaimed ingenuously: "Oh, what a lot of little curés!" For I had never yet seen any priests who were not curés; and I thought the two words were synonymous; my twelve-year-old instinct was as good as the reason of some oldsters in this matter. The children, after having assisted at Mass, returned with my brother, who then came up to us for the first time; for it was one of my father's principles never to disturb anyone while engaged in his proper work, least of all his own children. Edme Restif was profoundly respected by his sons; that is to say, he was always honourably welcomed.

Here I must insert a portrait of the Abbé Thomas. He was a tall, thin young man, with a long, wood-coloured face and a blue chin; his skin was glossy, his nose aquiline, his eyebrows thick and black. Through an accident, he had a lump as big as a walnut on the right cheek. He was reserved, very strong without appearing to be so, hasty, passionate and lascivious, but master of himself through pious exercise. He was born to take a second place, as he lacked decision and was submissive to authority, the crushing effect, I think, of his elder brother's distinction, rather than of his own natural disposition. His character was no more Restif than his colouring. He had the soul as he had the earthy complexion of the Dondènes, his mother's family. (Of the children by the first marriage, Anne was half and half and the curé all Restif, as was Marie Beaucousin who came after him; Marianne was ugly and half and half; Madeleine was agreeable though a Dondène; Margot was Dondène, ugly and thickset. I resembled the curé; the unfortunate Marie Geneviève was half Ferlet, and Catherine, her twin, more Ferlet; Baptiste resembled our ancestor Tintamarre; Élisabeth was a Simon; Charles was handsome and all Restif; Pierre was mainly Ferlet with something of the Dulis, my maternal grandmother's family.) The Abbé was timid, but violent if pushed to extremes. He did not love

Barbare Ferlet's children and took pleasure in mortifying them. But it must not be forgotten that religion had strengthened all his qualities, and so weakened his defects that his want of spirit had at times all the merit of a most amiable and frank good nature.

We went up to the choir boys' dormitory which had a beautiful view: one could see all Paris from its windows, or at least all that is visible from that side. I was very much pleased with my little curés, of whom, they said, I was to be one; they all surrounded me, and made me doubly welcome, as their new comrade and as their master's brother. After a light refreshment we left for Paris.

I was gay and light-hearted: even my father was surprised that I was not more shy, but he realised that children like myself, and no more than myself, did not intimidate me. If my brother had been just one of the serving men, Olivier or Paul, I should have been as bashful as if they had all been archbishops: but he was their master, so what had I to blush for?

As the small-pox had so much altered me that my brother affirmed he could never have recognised me, I was sent ahead to make my entry alone. I must have had a remarkable attack of sociability, for I fell in, though awkwardly, with the jest; and had proof thereby of the horrible ravages worked on my "prettiness" by the Arabian scourge. My sister looked at me indifferently, and asked what I wanted. Her husband, more perceptive, exclaimed: "A little Burgundian, I'll wager!" Then my father came in, and Marie ran to embrace him with tears in her eyes. After she had greeted her brother, she came to me. "He is not so pretty," she said, "but if only he is good! that is all that is necessary." She could not get over her surprise at the change in me; for, from being blond like my mother, I had become dark like my father; my once curly hair drooped lankly on either side of my long face, which was worn with fatigue and blackened by the journey; and a pockmarked skin must be kept very clean to be at all agreeable. Dinner was served, and I was encouraged to talk. On the road, my father and brother had been conversing together, and I had walked in front, observing with astonishment everything I saw. I was not at all abashed by Paris; I found myself in my natural element. I was asked what I had noticed, and gave an account of some childish observations on the shops, and the women selling, and the lackeys. Then I made my first little sketch, though I had not yet learnt from Coqueley-Chaussepierre how to make people really laugh: "But . . . ha! ha! ha! what surprised me most" (leaving the table the better to mimic it) "was a young girl who was half naked – for her skirt was in tatters and only reached her knees, her shoes were in holes and her stockings of mud, and her jacket showed the rents in her chemise. She had a basket tray in front of her, and was singing out: *Crisps! Crisps from the oven!* She was as gay and as bold as if her clothes had been of the finest! She was laughing at everybody. Yet I should have been sorry for her, if she had not made fun of me when I went up quite close to see what she was selling. 'How much do you want, little boy? I can cut you off two yards!' I didn't say anything, and she made big eyes at me, and said to one of her companions: 'Here, look at this, Marie-Louise, this little Jocriss' who takes the hens out to piss, he is staring at me like an idiot! Does he take me for a freak at a fair? He has come a long way, for his boots are covered with dust, poor innocent!' And then she began singing again, *Crisps! Crisps!* her hands on her hips – so. I do not know what was on the tray, for it was covered with a bit of old black stuff, and that smelt of stewed pear." I told this so ingenuously that everyone, even my father, laughed heartily. "I have a high opinion of my young brother," said Marie; and then, speaking to the Abbé Thomas: "I recommend him to your care, brother." "He has a sense of humour!" exclaimed Beaucousin. "I will teach him some jokes." And he gave off half-a-dozen trivialities at which he laughed a great deal, and which I have totally forgotten, but they sell the kind of thing at *Langlois*. Afterwards, while I was standing at the door *to look at Paris* (but I had ears), my father told how astonished my brother the curé had been by my prodigious memory. This pleased the Abbé Thomas, who proposed to make use of me to stimulate his pupils, nearly all of whom were sluggish and indifferent.

After dinner and a short turn in the town I had to take leave of my father to return to Bicêtre with the Abbé Thomas. This parting was not altogether painful, for my father was not going home yet and I would see him again; also I was drunk with excitement.

On the way my new master said some very sensible things to me. He pointed out that he had a good many pupils of whom I should be one, and that to call him "brother" would make a difference between them and myself, so that it would be fairer to put myself on an equality by calling him *Monsieur* as did the others. This remark was a revelation to me and, braggart though I was, I felt it would be more worthy of me to owe nothing to the claims of blood. My name was Nicolas Edme; the Abbé Thomas told me that the title "brother" was used in the little Community, and that among the pupils there were already a brother Nicolas, and a brother Edme, who could not be deprived of their names. "But I know one that will do: you shall be called Brother Augustin, a fine name and that of the Church's greatest doctor. Would you like that?" I replied that it was a beautiful name, quite as good as *Monsieu' Nicolas*, as they called me at home. "What, *Monsieur* Nicolas!" "Yes, Monsieur, that is what I am called in Sacy."

The Abbé Thomas was delighted that I began of myself to address him thus, and augured well for my docility.

On our return to Bicêtre for supper, I was placed, not at the little table where my brother sat with the under-master, M. Maurice, and two of the red-capped children, brothers Nicolas Fayel and Jean-Baptiste Poquet, but at one of the two big tables, between Brother Edme of Troyes, a great tease, and Brother Joseph, red-haired and with a character to match. I needed patience.

I had the ordinary food of the house which was by no means excellent: a bad stew cooked in the way least suited to improve its flavour. Since then I have noticed that the cooking in all institutions spoils the meat instead of improving it, and this with the sole end of enriching the bursar. The cooks do not themselves eat what they season, or rather poison, for the poor; they have different food, the same that is served to the staff, and the poor are treated very much worse than such stray animals in Paris as live on refuse. The bursar has specially cooked meals, sumptuous and delicate as a tax farmer's. I never got accustomed to this food, and as we were obliged to dispose of it, we used to throw some of it away under the table. Luckily the brown bread was good. We had a half-can of wine with every meal. I do not know what it tasted like as I always drowned mine in water. However I was well at Bicêtre, save for my teeth, which lost their ivory whiteness and took on a darkish colour.

My father went away without my having taken part in his farewells. I was only sure of this when I was told to add a message of duty to the New Year letter. As soon as I knew that he was no longer in Paris, I was attacked by that grievous malady which I had already experienced at Vermenton; tears flowed involuntarily from my eyes, even in the midst of the smiles I forced to my lips. My condition seemed so affecting to my kind schoolfellows that they used all their childish wiles to dissipate my sadness. The two acolytes, Brother Nicolas and Brother Jean-Baptiste, exerted themselves most on my behalf, and with so much delicacy that their kindness sometimes eased my suffering. Nevertheless the Abbé Thomas, seeing that tears still rose and overflowed in spite of myself, sent me with my two friends to the infirmary, so that the other boys should not be troubled. This secluded room was extremely clean and there was the most touching statuette imaginable above the fireplace: the Infant Jesus holding out his arms to us, and below this verse from the psalms: *"Venite, Filii mei, audite me: et timorem Domini docebo vos!" Come, my children, and harken unto me and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* I was moved, and wept tears of tenderness; and this was the first step towards consolation. Home-sickness is a grievous malady! If by ill luck an exile recalls a song much sung in his own country, and sings it, his sorrow will rise and choke him. I thought my own would kill me when I recalled a *Deo laus* of the plough.

See how the sun now rises fair
And sets the birds to sing in air
Till each proclaims with every note:
Oh, what a shame; if he went out!
As I climb up on this hill-side
I feel the lighter with each stride
For here are buds all bound in green
Sweet to be smelt and to be seen. . . .

With this air ringing in my ears, my anguish was as strong as that nostalgia which constrains the Swiss to return to their own country or die. They have been known to expire on hearing their comrades sing a pastoral air called the Cows' Reel, which is peculiar to the shepherds of that mountainous country; at first they weep, then they sob, and when the fountain of their tears runs dry, they can no longer breathe. Thanks to my two kind companions, little by little my grief abated. Fayel especially was so gentle and gracious in his ways to me in the early stages, that he won my heart completely. Jean-Baptiste seemed at first sight to have something of the dandy in him; he was exquisite, elegant and charming; but he was neither fickle nor capricious.

The first thing that I was taught was to read correctly; that is to say, with the right consonances and inflexions. It was a great surprise when I first read aloud in public, from Royaumont's *Figures de la Bible,* to hear the undermaster's key rap upon the table at almost every word that I pronounced. But I did not have to be told more than once; and, from the next day, M. Maurice quoted me as a model of intelligence and industry. Not in my presence, however; but Nicolas Fayel, my dormitory neighbour, told me in the evening as we were going to bed.

Bound in close friendship to Fayel, I was no happier than before, but for opposite reasons. My two first friends, rough peasant lads, had been wanting in sensibility; Fayel, on the other hand, was over-sensitive, capricious and jealous; it was he who gave me an understanding of the sufferings of women later: a new Tiresias, I in some sort played the part of the embarrassed mistress, constrained in conversation, uneasy even in her glances. Once my chosen friend, Fayel, as I have said, quarrelled with me and tormented me, or would only speak to pretty Brother Jean-Baptiste, whose effeminate face and brilliant rosy colouring suggested a girl in disguise rather than a real boy. One evening, Fayel, with whom I often played after supper at chess or with the large twelve-sided dice, was more than usually sulky with me; he had not wanted to play with me, and he would not speak to me. I could not sleep that night. In the morning, I said to him: "What have I done? Only tell me, and I am ready to make amends; but do not be cross with me any more! I cannot do without your friendship." (At least, such was the sense of my words.) Brother Nicolas looked at me, and I saw that there were tears in his beautiful eyes; I was so much touched, that I threw my arms about his neck. "Ah," he said, "it is my misfortune to be jealous. Dear Augustin, I hate Brother Jean-Baptiste; never speak to him again." "Do you want me to be ungrateful? Has he not cared for me like a brother? Ah! you cannot want me to be ungrateful!" I paused for a moment; then glanced at Fayel, and it seemed to me that he had turned pale. "Very well, then, I will be ungrateful," I said. "Yes, even that is preferable to grieving you." Thus was our friendship cemented. But I begged Brother Joseph, my neighbour on the right, to make my excuses to young Poquet. And the child sent me this message: "I know Fayel; do not let Brother Augustin be troubled on my account; I shall always love him, and Fayel too."

I may not have mentioned that this kind and sensible child was the Abbé Thomas's friend. But I have said that our mess was very bad. The master and his assistant had a roast every evening, as did the officers and priests of the institution, and they used to distribute portions among the children, sending them round by Brothers Jean-Baptiste and Fayel, who sat at the little table. The former always came to me. "Brother Augustin is country-bred," he whispered to the master, "and hardly touches the stews which suit Parisians well enough." "Did he ask you to tell me that?" "He! if he knew I had mentioned it he would die of shame. He blushes every time I take him anything." It is easy to imagine how sensible I was to such conduct on the part of a comrade to whom I no longer even spoke. Even

Fayel was touched (for it was he who told this to me), but instead of being less jealous, he was more so: he would have preferred me to owe everything to him. He loved me as much as I loved him; but before I give an illustration of his friendship, I must lead up to its occasion, which was one of those flashes of sensibility that have often brought my obscure existence to the light, by drawing attention to the energy of my emotions.

Each dormitory at Bicêtre has a governor and assistant-governor. During the last years of Vintimille and the short episcopacy of Gigot de Bellefons, who died of the smallpox, the Jansenists had extended their activities to hospitals and done much good. They had established a somewhat monastic rule in the dormitories; but there was nothing of bigotry in the cleanliness, the better food, and the wine which they provided at their own expense; nor in the revenue of ten thousand livres provided by the under-governor of Saint-Mayeul alone, whose beloved name I have forgotten. I remember that the governor's name was Duprat; and he had a sister working in the institution who helped the food at table for our little community. The assistant-governor came of a good family, and had been something of a rake until he was converted by the Jansenists. Since then he had devoted himself to the poor. The other dormitories were at that time on the same footing; a Monsieur Lancelot directed the *La Force* Infirmary, and so on. Each dormitory is called after a saint and has its patronal festival, which is solemnly celebrated with High Mass at a private altar, followed by vespers, sermon, and benediction. These festivals were also made an occasion for giving pleasure to the poor, with gifts of linen, tobacco, and even money. How the Jansenists were blessed! On the festival of Saint-Mayeul, the dormitory of the good assistant-governor was hung with tapestries, which pictured landscapes, with woods, wild animals and birds – not hunted, but in the peace and tranquillity of nature. Mass was sung. My eyes were ravished by the tapestries; and although the constant duties of the service prevented me from giving them all my attention, the charm worked; I seemed to see my beloved valley painted to the life. When mass was over, my only desire was to return; when I should have been working, I was a young savage again, straying among forests. At dinner I could eat nothing; my imagination was in a ferment. At last the time for Vespers came, and as sermon and Benediction were to follow, we had five hours of service before us. As I entered, my eyes turned towards my dear forests: the tapestries had become even lovelier, and one more vivid than the rest, which had been hidden during mass by the altar furniture, now disclosed the whole of what I had only seen in part: a wild boar, a deer, a wolf, a hoopoe among the branches, and, in the distance, a flock led by a little boy, holding three dogs in leash. At sight of this, I ceased to be where I was: with my eyes on this enchanting landscape, I forgot everything; I did not sing, I was lost to my surroundings. This ecstasy, these moments of delight, lasted for five hours, and were but an instant; once under the spell, I dissolved in tears without being conscious of it. Happily it was Winter, and my protecting hood prevented me from being seen by everybody. During the sermon, of which I heard not a word, sobs stifled me. With my eyes fixed upon a leaping hare and a crouching rabbit; on magpies chattering at a watching fox; upon sheep . . . pasturing sheep, and their shepherd with his dogs; upon a boar on the edge of a wood, a wolf in ambush. . . . I was back in my valley, and an exquisite pain caressed and tore my heart. I should have cried aloud had I been alone, and so found some relief. . . . The preacher, a lay-Jansenist, noticed my emotion and thought himself the cause; my mind was fifty leagues away from him and the source of my tears was quite other than his words. Instinctively I wept for my lost innocence and tranquil life. I wept for the misfortunes and travails which awaited me, and which today overwhelm me.* Happy, peaceful loves – it was for you I wept! . . . Since then I have drunk from the poisoned cup of towns – not of sordid interest or low swindling; not of the tragic madness of gambling, of crapulous drunkenness or insatiable gluttony; not of idleness, mother, sister and daughter of crime: but of lechery and the unconquerable desire for those mortal pleasures which beauty seasons with artful adornment; and, yet more culpable, of lubricity, extortionate beyond the force of nature. From the poisoned cup of towns I have absorbed desires for slim waists, tiny feet and enchanting breasts; for the provocative face, the small, voluptuously tilted nose and teasing smile; for pretty childish ways, seductive words, extravagant adornments and lascivious walking; for a deceptive facility and the degrading perfidy of prostitution. O, love of forests, I lost you when I lost my innocence! How rightly I wept!

All my schoolfellows had at last noticed my tears; they frightened my two friends, my fond though jealous Fayel and generous Poquet. The latter drew the Abbé's attention to me, saying: "He is taken with home-sickness

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*I wrote this on the 23rd of May, 1784, while I was being persecuted by the astronomer Lalande. He complained about me to Lenoir and Miromesnil, because I had printed the Letters of Felisette at the end of my *Prévention Nationale*; but he could not get me punished. Then he came to me to obtain a copy of the Latin letter: I had one made. Little Saint-Ange de Sologne was my informer with respect to Mlle St Leger. My object in printing these letters, which were unsigned and could only be recognised by Felisette herself, was to make their author blush, alone and face to face with herself, for her mean little shifts; for her praise of me to my face while she traduced me behind my back to a mutual friend. The Latin letter which enlightened me, was from that mutual friend himself, Bultel-Dumont, Treasurer of France. It was in connection with this shabby trick that Lenoir said to the Marquis de Marnesia, at that time my friend, who told it to Fontanes, who repeated it to Agnès Lebègue, "that there were people shut up at Bicêtre who deserved it less than I did." Vile scoundrel, and what do you deserve?

again." When we had returned to our own place, the master spoke to me gently, and I smiled. "What were you crying about?" he asked. Immediately my tears began to flow again; I sobbed; I tried to speak, but could only say: "The woods, the woods!" He understood, and glanced at my companions, who tried to cheer me by making me play chess. I was beginning to like this game, and Fayel found ways of adding to its charm; it distracted my thoughts. Sometimes it can serve this purpose, but only provided that the emotional disturbance is not too great; in that case a forced distraction of the mind, however brought about, only exacerbates the ill instead of diminishing it. That evening Fayel made advances to Poquet, and called him to arbitrate on a certain move.

It was Palm Sunday, and since October I had not changed the stockings or breeches or shoes in which I had arrived; such was my natural timidity that I had not dared to ask for others. I was in rags; but my cassock concealed this from observation, and the Abbé Thomas gave no thought to such things, which were provided without his intervention. Fayel was the first to notice that I never went to the wardrobe and, one evening, he waited until I was asleep and then went through my underclothes. He found them in the most wretched state! . . . He shed tears of regret for not having thought sooner of my needs. He did not waken me, but called softly to the night porter: "Paul," he said, "to-morrow morning, before we get up, bring the things which I am going to write down, to my neighbour here." He made a list, and Paul, knowing that he was one of the two favourites, punctually carried out his orders. When I got up next morning I found everything I needed. Fayel pretended not to notice my surprise. I dressed. During that day, I observed that Fayel was even more affectionate than usual, and my heart guessed the reason. . . . But if I had been in doubt, a little conversation which I overheard during the after-dinner recreation would have revealed the truth. Fayel and Poquet had gone into the infirmary, and I was following to join them. They were talking about me: "Ah! Fayel, how different from us! The master's brother, and yet so modest, so timid, that he dare not ask even for absolute necessities!" "He was . . . he was . . . ah!" exclaimed Fayel compassionately, "devoured!" "Gentle Jesus!" cried Poquet, "it was a penance! some day he will be a saint." . . . What exquisite pleasure! For the first time I felt the full sweetness of friendship. "Ah! Fayel," I said to myself, "you have a right to be jealous, and in you it is only one quality the more! Dear friend, you have served me where I was most vulnerable; you have spared me the *shame* of asking for what was absolutely necessary!" It was in effect doubly kind thus to rid me of the burden of my natural *shame* – for *bashfulness* is not the right word for what was, at bottom, pride. We were called to work, but I found a moment in which to confess to Poquet that I had overheard them. "Humour Fayel," he said, "he is an excellent friend. I respect him more than he knows. We would be lucky to find a heart such as his, even if we had to condone his failings. . . . But Fayel has none."

Though *philandric* vice is utterly foreign to me, it might have been all up with my morals if, as with that Roman, a dagger stroke to my virtue had not pierced the abscess that was killing me. One day Fayel and I were sent to the Sister Superior to ask for a replenishment of our wardrobe, which was exhausted. We did not find the Mother, but a pretty secretary instead. She sent Fayel to the Superior, who was very fond of him, and kept me with her. She was a pretty brunette of twenty; and asked a hundred questions about my native place and family. From time to time she went to the door and looked out. She seemed to want something, and made me look her straight in the face. Seeing that my ardent glances belied my shy demeanour, she began to fancy . . . the truth. . . . She hurried to the door again, and came back eagerly, her hands stretched out in joy – or in astonishment. She sat down and drew me to her, saying: "Who combs your hair?" "A *lay-sister.*" "Is she young? Is she pretty?" "No, sister." "No, sister, no, sister. . . . Come quickly, and I will comb your hair." I knelt in front of her; Sister Mélanie buried my face between her thighs: "Is she older than me?" "Ah, little sister, you are young!" "Little sister, little sister," she said wriggling. "And prettier?" "You are the prettiest of all the sisters!" "Ah, little man! . . ." and she wriggled again. Instinct and a double memory prompted me to get up and throw my arms round her neck. I pushed her towards her pretty little bed. "Poor little man!" she said laughing and backing towards it of her own accord. "What does he want?" I was beyond myself. "What does he want? What is he looking for?" That was the whole of Sister Mélanie's defence. It answered its purpose. . . . She devoured me with caresses. And, as I seemed on the point of fainting, she gave me an elixir. I had scarcely swallowed it when Fayel re-entered. We left. As we went on our way together, we perceived that we had both drunk the same elixir. But he was discreet, and so was I.

We had been told to come again at the end of a fortnight. And as, on the previous occasion, we had taken so long a time, young Poquet, equally beloved of the sisters, was sent with us. We were told in the office that the Superior and her pretty secretary Mélanie were in the courtyard with Sister Saint-Augustin, who presided over that part of the house. I do not know if Mélanie had said anything. The Superior led away Fayel; Sister Saint-Augustin took Poquet, and I was left alone with Mélanie and the blonde, fifteen-year-old Rosalie, Sister Augustin's secretary. . . . Rosalie's eyes devoured me. "What, him?" she said to Mélanie. "Yes, him." "Oh Lord, that's nothing to be afraid of!" "Quite so. It is a good opportunity." "Oh, opportunity!" "Certainly. Are you going to play the prude, as if I did not know you?" "And the mothers?" "Oh, they have enough to keep them quiet for two hours strumming on their . . ." (and she burst out laughing). "All right, then. What does one do?" Mélanie whispered to her. "Oh, I'm to begin first?" "You're very particular . . . for anyone belonging to this place!" Rosalie came at me in so wanton a fashion, that I have never seen it equalled save once, in la Massé, 26 May, 1756. . . . We were almost caught by the two mothers, but Mélanie, who was on guard, kept them for a few moments at the door. . . . We were all three given some elixir, and then left. . . . For a pious little Jansenist my morals were somewhat relaxed! But it is obvious that I did not seek out the adventure; and that my former experience, to which I owed this happiness, had also been purely accidental. . . . Nor must it be thought that my companions were as myself: they were caressed as children, but were not strong enough for the rest.

This double love adventure led to yet another, the details of which I will reserve, with many others, for my Calendar. Here it is enough to indicate the subject of an interesting engraving, which exactly portrays the face and character of the two pretty grey-sisters and, in the background, shows the kind of caress which the mothers bestowed on my schoolfellows.* We were given everything we asked for, whereas when Brother Joseph was sent, or Brother Edme, or Brother Étienne the pantler, or Brother Denis the dormitory boy, or Brother Barthelmy the thurifer, or Brother Charles, or Brother Hippolyte, etc., they could get nothing out of the Sisters. Brother Paterne, our second thurifer and a tall, fine boy from Orleans, had been a great favourite with the two young sisters and the two mothers; but one day he was seen with Mélanie, and there was some talk. Paterne made himself the sacrifice and took all the blame; he was never sent again. Our success was attributed to the insinuating manner of my two friends, but they owed it entirely to their charms; and I got as much as they did, thanks to the precocious maturity which enabled me to take the place of Brother Paterne.

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*Besides depicting a given situation, the engravings† will indicate the character of the actors by their faces, and sometimes express more than I have described; as, for instance, in this case, the way in which the two mothers caressed young Fayel and Poquet.

†The projected illustrations were never executed. Restif, however, attached great importance to the engravings for his books; he was reckless of expense over their production, and gave minute

But more than one reader interrupts me: "Monsieur Nicolas, how old were you? About thirteen, if I am not mistaken, and so were your friends. And yet you make them talk and think and behave as though they were eighteen or twenty." Reader, I am telling the truth! But your objection gives me occasion to establish a verity, which is related to many others, and is the key to certain phenomena in the last century. Pascal, Racine, and the other Port-Royalists had a sagacity, a power of close reasoning, a precision, a grasp of detail, a purity of diction which is the more astonishing since at the same time the Jesuits produced nothing but the inept Annats, Caussins, etc. Serious and reflective, the Jansenists develop the power to think deeply sooner and more effectively than do the Molinists; the severer discipline gives vigour to the mind and heart, by using the energy of all the passions to vanquish difficulties; the mind is turned in upon itself by the

instructions to the artist (he was able to use a pencil himself), who was generally Binet. He liked to have himself represented as tall, slender, and elegant, and his favourite heroines similar in build, with compressed waist, prominent breasts, and impossibly small ankles and feet. [Ed. note.]

habit of reflection: in a word, it inevitably produces logicians, philosophers or devotees. And this is the reason, the Jansenist is always in God's presence. Convinced that forgetfulness of him will of itself ensure damnation, every action is performed in the sight of this formidable witness, terrible even towards the just. Therefore the mind works unceasingly, examining, unfolding, studying the hidden places of the heart. As the same mental discipline is applied to everything, all their pupils are not devout; on the contrary, the excessive severity of the Jansenist God makes him feared in childhood, questioned in youth, and disbelieved in maturity by a well-balanced mind. The studious Jansenist brings all the attention and penetration which he has exercised upon himself to the pursuit of learning, and makes rapid progress; the practical man always retains his knowledge of himself and the power to know others: he is apt to be strict, cavilling, tiresome. Is it astonishing, therefore, that Racine painted the human heart as no one since has been able to do? He was a Jansenist and remained a Jansenist. Is it surprising that Pascal, with his initial endowment, should have surpassed his contemporaries in one way as Racine did in another? That Boileau should have elaborated those polished disciplined lines which are the despair and admiration of our poets? A hundred times I have had occasion to observe this excellence of the true Jansenist: their fools are less fools than others, though they are the most unbearable, the most dehumanising of men, doing to death over a slow fire, killing with pin pricks. I have been a Jansenist, and: "It is through this that I am worth anything, if I am worth anything." I am one no longer, but the habit of reflection remains – this priceless habit, which may have shortened my days, but has preserved me from boredom . . . boredom, that slow paralysis of the spirit, worse than death! Let us compare a Molinist with his opponent. The true Molinist is more amiable, more of a social entity; his God is the kind, indulgent father of his children, loving them, desiring their happiness, always ready to pardon and to take them to his breast at the least sign of repentance. He does not believe that man must always have his God before his eyes, trembling for each action, for every decision: quite otherwise, he is pictured as the Good Shepherd delighting in the playful gambols of his beloved flock upon the grass. Accordingly he is less attentive, less concentrated; impressions do not cut so deep, they remain on the surface. That, Reader, is what forty years of reflection has taught me. And it is not the only truth that I can prove: for no one can dispute as a conclusion from *my father's* education, which must follow on a reading of his *Life, that the human animal only attains the perfection of which he is capable by strict discipline in youth*. . . . But I am contradicting a great philosopher! I am contradicting J.-J. Rousseau! Fellow citizen! I have no interest in depreciating the citizen of Geneva, but I affirm that his *Émile* is the worst book which has appeared in thirty centuries: that is to say, the most dangerous. It overflows with errors and distortions; above all, on the study of Latin about which Jean-Jacques talks the most puerile nonsense. . . . Fortunately our colleges still exist! If we were guided by this wrongheaded man of brilliant paradoxes we should relapse into barbarism. Let the blind partisans of Rousseau learn that the grammar of the French, Spanish and Italian languages is only to be found in Latin. Each of these three dialects has developed its own syntax; but the basis, that which gives the innermost meaning of the words, lies in the Latin tongue, and a little in the Greek, both of which are essential to every Frenchman, Italian, and Spaniard, who does not want to use seven-eighths of the words in his language like a parrot.* And whence came this Rousseau's perfect dialectic, his sagacity,

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*The sixth and last volume of *Idées Singulières, Le Glossografe,* will treat of this subject. I have been working on it since 1769.

his depth, his knowledge of the human heart? From his religious education by the sect most kin to Jansenism. But to return.

The Jansenists delighted in method, and this was the outcome of reflection. Our day was admirably arranged; not a moment was lost. Morning prayer was said on getting up; then we rinsed our mouths with vinegar and water; we breakfasted, and Brother Étienne, one of our comrades, cut and distributed the bread. We wrote until ten. Reading aloud came next; out of the same book so that each boy could follow on immediately his name was called. Then we sang for half an hour, with Brother Étienne, the pantler, as singing master. We dined at noon, and an hour's recreation followed. Then we took our school books – the New Testament, the Catechism, and the Rudiment (which the Abbé had not wanted me to learn). We recited, wrote and did sums from three to four, when we had a light meal. Private reading for instruction and amusement began at half-past four; the Librarian, Brother Jean-Baptiste, kept a list of all the books being read, and brought each boy his own until it was finished; then another was chosen from among the volumes not in use. How eagerly I looked forward to this time! about three hours of reading, unfettered and of one's own choice! I thought of it in the morning while I was getting up; as the happy time came nearer I thrilled with pleasurable anticipation, and when the moment actually arrived, I rejoiced; I discovered then the same happiness as when reading the *Bon Pasteur*, or looking at the tapestries of Saint-Mayeul. Whatever the place or country I was reading about, I was in the midst of it, taken thither by my vivid imagination. These three hours of ecstasy reconciled me to the institution; they made my stay dear to me at the time, and a tender memory in retrospect. (At these same three hours, I have since experienced the same pleasurable thrill, when the curtain rises at any of our three theatres. What joy now remains to me? Which is the happy hour in my day? Alas, all are the same! and my heart is only quickened by fear)! . . . After the reading, there was half-an-hour's conversation; one of the masters questioned us upon the difficulties we had encountered, and resolved them; and it was thought a bad sign in a boy if he never had any. They certainly should have augured well for me; for unless it was an absorbing book, such as Andilly's *Vies des Pères des deserts*, or the *Actes des Martyrs*, I raised a crowd of questions on my reading, and most of all on Rollin's history which, opening a whole new world to me, plunged me in deep astonishment. Often Maurice, the assistant master, finding himself unable to satisfy my demands, would go to the master who, with several dictionaries at his disposal, gave a full answer and delivered the oracle. . . . We had supper at eight o'clock, recreation until nine, and everybody was in bed by the half hour.

If the weather was in the least fine, we had our midday recreation out of doors, under the supervision of the masters. We ran in the fields, climbed the hill, or went into Gentilly on the banks of the Bièvre. Thursday was a half-holiday, and we would go to a house in the country at Vitry, which Fusier had acquired for the use of his little community. There we had a huge garden, with vegetables and fruits of every kind, providing us with an excellent dinner which we found ready on our arrival. We took our rations with us, but these were handed over to the gardener and, by previous agreement, were taken by certain families in exchange for eggs and dairy produce. A thing which made us respected in the neighbourhood was our pretty oratory, where we said Nones and Vespers. In Winter we were back by five o'clock and finished our holiday indoors; playing, talking or reading. The most sensible chose to read, and I followed them in this. Apart from the Jansenist discipline, my education in Sacy had given me a taste for work and made me understand the value of time. Brother Edme was always busy with mechanical contrivances, of which some were admirable, seeing the means at his disposal. This excellent method had been established by Fusier, a man of real ability. I do not venture to say that it may not have demanded somewhat overmuch of the children; but consider the wise allocation of our time, alternating work with play: the three recreations, the carefully observed rule to be out of doors whenever the weather was in the least fine, the store of health and good air laid up each week at Vitry, and it must be granted that Fusier thoroughly understood the constitution of young people, who should be made strong and industrious. As to the moral teaching, it was of that extravagant Christian ethic which only moves ardent and unreflective spirits to enthusiasm. There are two maxims in the New Testament which should be offered to children with the greatest care: *"Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you"* is the *Unum necessarium* which peopled the deserts of the Thebaid with anchorites, and produces nothing in our own times but bad capuchins. It is surprising that this maxim, so foolishly impressed upon me, did not send me flying into the forests where I should have become saint or robber. What held me back will be divined from the earlier *Epochs* of my life: women. The second maxim: *It is better to obey God than men*, delivers the peace and repose of States to the judgment of fools, as all the religious wars testify. Happily the *Unum necessarium*, drummed into me by my brothers, did not prevent me from working.

Before passing to another matter, I think it in place here to give some idea of our little library, which Fusier had collected before his expulsion.

1 *The Bible,* Sacy translation.
2 *Figures de la Bible,* Sacy-Royaumont.
3 *The New Testament,* attributed to Mons.
4 *The New Testament,* P. Quesnel.
5 *The Imitation.*
6 The Fathers of the Church, especially Saint Augustine and Saint Jerome.
7 *Lettres Provinciales,* which, though not in my line, I read with the greatest pleasure.
8 *Essais de Morale,* Nicole.
9 *L'Année Chrétienne,* Tourneux.
10 *Fréquente Communion,* Arnaud.
11 *Vies des Pères des Déserts,* D'Andilly.
12 *Actes des Martyrs.*
13 *L'Abrégé de l'Histoire Ecclésiastique,* Fleury.
14 *Mœurs des Israélites et des Chrétiens.*
15 *Histoire Ancienne,* Rollin.
16 *Histoire Romaine.*
17 *Histoire de Port-Royal et de ses Solitaires.*
18 *La Médecine,* M. Hamon.
19 *La Vérité rendue sensible à tout le monde.*
20 *Anecdotes de la Constitution Unigenitus.*
21 *La Vie et les Miracles,* R. Diacre Pâris.
22 *La Vie de Monsieur Tissard* (a masterpiece of Jansenist hair-splitting: Fusier was the author).
23 *Prémotion Physique.*
24 *Conversion du Pécheur,* Denates.

25 *Géographie de l'Écriture Sainte.*
26 *Tableau de la France et de l'Univers.*
27 Richelet's Dictionary.
28 And the other Dictionaries, Joubert, Boudot.
29 The collection of *Nouvelles Écclésiastiques.*
30 *Le Bon Pasteur,* etc., for I have forgotten many. We had exactly 366 volumes in use.

The Bible was not read in private; each pupil in turn read a chapter during dinner. During supper in the evening we had one of the works of St Augustine or St Jerome, but in my time we only read their letters. Before the after-dinner recreation, it was the custom for the master to ask such of his pupils as he thought fit what they remembered of the reading. My schoolfellows would repeat one verse or another, mixing up the beginning with the end. One day the Abbé Thomas came to me – he spoke to me but seldom, so as not to appear influenced by our carnal brotherhood – and asked me what I remembered of the chapter just read. Beginning with the first verse: *Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger,* etc. I fluently recited the whole chapter (which was that one from the second book of Kings wherein Joab treacherously kills Abner) to the last verse: *The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.* It is impossible to express the astonishment of my schoolfellows; they all congratulated me, especially Fayel and Poquet. I told them simply that I had known all Holy Writ by heart before I had come amongst them. The Abbé Thomas heard me and seemed pleased; he said in a low voice to the two acolytes: "My father has a Bible, and Brother Augustin used to read it incessantly: he was right to admit it." I was soon to surprise my schoolfellows and the master himself even more.

There were, or there are, seven or eight ecclesiastics at Bicêtre: these are as the parish priest to his parish; and each of the houses of the Hôpital Général has a rector, who is like the curé. The "parish" priests, even the dean or vicar, take their meals together in a common refectory, and two pupils from among the choir boys used to go there to read aloud during dinner and supper; and, so that all the boys should profit, the readers were changed weekly. Sometimes the week was prolonged, so that the reader might know the story of some character to the end; in the same way it might be curtailed. I went in my turn to the priest's refectory, and could not have chanced better; I had to read, from Fleury's big *Histoire Écclesiastique* the story of the notorious Abeillard, wrongly written Abaillard, and whom a priest made me pronounce still more incorrectly, Abêlard. I began; and was so entranced that I was genuinely sorry when the officer for the week clapped his hands to end the reading. On my return to the dormitory, I repeated all that I had read. But I noticed that the Abbé Thomas frowned when there was any reference to Héloïse; so I was careful, on the following days, to pass over everything that concerned her; and these details were thereby more deeply engraved on my mind. . . . But here is the astonishing thing to which I have already referred.

One of the resident priests, Aubry by name, said to resemble Santeuil in face and eccentricity, delivered a sermon one Sunday at Vespers. He spoke of damnation, and tried to make his listeners understand how it was that the living sinner passed after death into this state. His argument was so lucid that I gave him all my attention. Besides I was deeply interested in the subject after my little backslidings with the sisters, each of which according to my reckoning was a deadly sin. And I feared Hell as the beardless Epicure feared the Tartar. "Sinners," exclaimed Aubry, "do not charge God with lack of power and goodness because he allows you to be engulfed in Hell. Completely free, you make your own destiny; and in this way: God is before all things order; sin is in its nature disorder: if you come to the end of your life in the love of sin, or of disorder, and die therein; at that fatal moment, sinners, when your soul is separated from your body, it becomes incapable of new impressions; eternally it will preserve those of its life, up to that moment when it was separated from body and organs. But if, dear people, the love of God or order is in your heart at that decisive moment; if a good life has made this love of order natural and habitual in your soul, then, after death, it will preserve the same for ever and fly to the breast of God, hurried thither by a powerful attraction stronger than that of the lode stone. If, on the contrary, sinners, you have lived in the use and love of vice, which is disorder and opposed to God, and you die in this state, your unruly soul flies from the order which it has always abhorred. Think not that God spurns it! His breast would open to it if it could return to order and the love of order: but it will for ever abhor order and God, because its nature is unchangeably fixed. And think not that, if you have lived in the use and love of vice, a feeble repentance, the offspring of fear, will give back to you the love of order and of God! This cannot wipe out the attitude of a lifetime; you will die in doubt and fear, and in fear and doubt you will remain throughout eternity; your soul, separated from your body, will never dare to seek union with supreme order, which is also happiness; it will go and hide itself in the eternal abyss. There, sinners, in the midst of disorder, which is anguish, torment and despair, your soul will perceive, like the fool, that it has lost the power to be wise; and will be the more wretched for that; itself for itself the insurmountable barrier which separates it for ever from God, order, and happiness. . . . At the resurrection, the impassive body, in its turn incapable of either physical or moral change, will for ever transmit to the soul the same perceptions as during life, with this distressing difference, that a ray of heavenly light will pierce the palpable darkness in which sinners abide, destroying the illusion which abuses us during life and presenting the fearful truth. . . . Ah, if but for one moment the damned could love God or order, their damnation would be at an end, but by the laws of nature this is impossible . . ." etc. Even now this argument seems to me much more reasonable than the sermons of Bourdaloue and the Abbé Poulle, which represent "a damned soul as loving God but rejected by Him." Can order spurn the love of order? They are as two lode stones, and the Jesuit and the Abbé propose the grossest absurdity! "During life," they add, "it is we who fly from God who, like a tender father, calls us to Him; whereas after death, it is God who flies from us and refuses us." What a petty, pitiful idea! What a vile, indecent assimilation of the Supreme Being to a mistress, who, for a long time betrayed, at last grows angry and becomes inexorable! Men of genius, your pretensions only deceive the superficial!

No one liked Aubry's sermon except myself; I saw the Abbé Thomas and even the resident priests shaking their heads. Aubry noticed it too; and sought support for the second point of his sermon in the Fathers, whose authority was not worth his own reasoning.

On our return to the dormitory the sermon was discussed; the Abbé Thomas raised certain points in it, and I noticed that his memory played him false. "If they like," I said to Fayel, "I can repeat the whole of the first point of the sermon." Fayel told Poquet, who told the Abbé Thomas.

The master showed great surprise, but finally decided not to let slip this chance of proving the excellence of my memory, proposing to see at the same time if judgment went with it. He made me stand in the middle of a circle. There I collected myself for a moment; I shut my eyes, and called before me the figure of Aubry. Seeing no one but him, the memory of his face and gestures so well recalled his sermon that, with the frequent use of synonyms, I repeated the whole of the first point. I was told afterwards (for my mind was following the preacher's every movement and I saw nothing) that my audience, eyes fixed upon me and mouths agape, seemed to remember as I spoke; never had there been an example of such attention nor of so profound a silence.

The silence continued for some minutes after I had finished. Finally the Abbé Thomas said: "That is well done! You certainly have an excellent memory." Brother Jean-Baptiste who, as the beloved disciple, could say what he liked, looked at the master, and said smiling: "He did not learn that sermon by heart in his village?" Monsieur Maurice, the assistant master, smiled too at this remark; but the Abbé regarded his favourite with such severity that the child turned pale, and two tears fell from his lowered eyes. My comrades surrounded me when we rose, and the phlegmatic brother Edme said: "I would give a finger to have your memory!" For he had a very bad one and was good at nothing except manual work; for which reason he was granted two hours during the day for drawing and carpentry, engraving and chasing characters on leather, sculpture, etc. As we were going to bed, Fayel whispered (for we were forbidden to speak after the *in manus*): "Dear Brother Augustin, I was delighted by your success this evening; but I fear it may do you harm! I have noticed more than once that the master is always trying to humiliate you; are you children of the same mother?" "No, dear Fayel." "Ah, then it goes without saying." He spoke no more about the matter then or ever after, for our separation was close at hand.

I do not think that I have forgotten anything of importance, save perhaps a pilgrimage made to Sainte-Geneviève during the octave of the feast. We were in full dress: that is to say, in feast-day cassocks, sashes, and so forth. The sisters saw us file past; we looked like real abbés – which delighted them all, and especially Sister Rosalie. The six red-caps usually outshone us, with their cleanliness, their dazzling albs, and girlish reverences which could delude even Abbé Thomas; but here they were at a disadvantage, for their wigs made them look like the young dancers who play little old men at the opera. At least so Mother Augustin told me next day when we were alone together; she came out when we stopped in front of the house, and made Rosalie give us each a cake. At Sainte-Geneviève we saw people who, for six sous, were allowed to touch the Shrine linens with the end of a pole. The Abbé Thomas was rudely disturbed by one such in the middle of his prayers. "My friend," he said to this man, who had paid his money, "it is not a garment touched at the Shrine with the end of a pole which will cure your ill, but fervent prayer, and you have not yet got upon your knees!" I saw a monk on the point of getting in a rage; he asked who we were, but no one satisfied his curiosity. On our return we went to the Cathedral; then on to the Salpêtrière, to pay our duty to Sister Julie, the Superior, whom the Abbé Thomas looked upon as a saint, though she was really nothing but a schemer. She seemed to know each of us, and all about us, for she had a word for every one. Most certainly these houses are sinks of intrigue and perversity.

The Archbishop of Paris, Gigot de Bellefons, was dead. A short time afterwards M. Christophe de Beaumont was appointed to the see. This priest was a descendant of the famous Baron des Adrets,* that nobleman of Dauphiné who, persecuted by the Catholics, revenged himself so cruelly on them afterwards. On his appointment, Beaumont's new see was the third he had occupied.† No sooner was he installed than he considered it his duty to make war on the Jansenists. I have already stated that I do not like the Jansenists; but they are Christians as much as others, *y poco mas*: I consider that influential positions should not be given to them, and even that those they have should be taken away; but what harm could be done by a few rich individuals in a hospital consecrated to the service of the aged poor, with whom they shared their income? What proselytes could they make among old artisans incapable of work, passing the evening of their life in a retreat where they had bread and blankets, and a shroud when they died; or among cripples and paralytics? Be easy, Pontiff, your solicitude was misplaced, and did nothing but harm. . . .

*The Baron des Adrets, driven into the mountains of Dauphiné, made himself chief of a band of brigands (for what other name can be given to rebellious Huguenots who lived on plunder?). He conceived a singular torture for the Catholics who fell into his hands. They were compelled either to take a run of twenty paces and leap over a precipice, or else to be thrown over it with their arms and legs bound. The advantage of jumping was that the victim could try to break his head against a rock: for those who did not kill themselves endured the sufferings of the wheel. One prisoner, more cunning than the others and a jester even in the awful moment of destruction, managed to put the cruel ancestor of the Archbishop Beaumont in a good temper by a retort which has since become famous. Ordered to jump, he three times took the run and three times drew back. "Are you ready to jump at last?" asked the terrible Baron. "That is the third attempt." "I will give it you in quart, General." The Baron smiled and forgave him.

†Beaumont was bishop of Bayonne and afterwards archbishop of Vienne. The following anecdote is well known: the servant of the elder Simon, the printer, at whose table the Abbé de Beaumont had often sat when he was only a minor priest in Paris, saw a decree posted up, beginning with the words *Christophe de Beaumont*. She hurried back to her master: "Monsieu'! Monsieu'! Is that Mgr Christophe de Beaumont the same as the Abbé de Beaumont who used to eat with us so often?" "Yes, it is the same." "Oh, then, there's no need to be clever to become Archbishop of Paris!"

A new rector was appointed by the new archbishop in place of M. Villaret, the good old priest who was dispossessed. The intruder was a man of violence, a servile creature, who tormented others, not out of fanaticism, but to attract the notice of those from whom he might expect advancement. . . . A couple of centuries earlier he would have used the dagger. On the day of his installation, the rector looked askance at the master of the choir boys, and at all the Jansenist governors when they went to welcome him: it was a bad augury! On the next day he held a visitation, accompanied by some of the priests: Villaret, Desert, Bonnefoi, Aubry, Maclegny (our confessor), and by a Gascon priest, whose name escapes me, even more violent, or more knavish, than the rector. . . . Maclegny was spokesman: "M. le Recteur would like to see your books," he said, after a greeting of the briefest. The master opened the library. The Rector and Bonnefoi glanced at the register. Aubry tried to jest with Brother Jean-Baptiste, the discreet Villaret and Desert stood in gloomy silence by the fireplace, and the Gascon priest put the youngest of us to the question. Naturally gentle and disposed to peace, Maclegny adroitly put aside all that could most offend the rector. Bonnefoi was a zealous Molinist; but his upright, even austere, life had won the respect of everyone in the institution; it was one prolonged good work. Other fanatics might inveigh against the Jansenists; Bonnefoi never said anything, but strove to excel them in purity, and equal their benevolence. And this was a much more effective method of attack than the other! He ministered to the most repulsive and abandoned of the poor, depriving himself even of necessities in order to succour them. In the infirmary of the Miséricorde (where the prostitutes were treated) I have heard him utter the most comforting truths of Religion to an unhappy woman to whom he was administering the last sacrament, and in so affecting a manner that her heart, more corrupt than her body, was touched; he gave her resignation and patience by soothing her suffering: "My dear sister, God himself has come to visit you." She was impressed by his conviction and was herself convinced; it saved her. As he was leaving, he said to the two ward sisters: "My very dear sisters, a little more cleanliness, I beg of you, in the name of our Lord whom I, a miserable sinner, have the honour to convey. Know that these poor sufferers are veritable members of Jesus Christ, in virtue of these very sufferings even although they are merited; they are his members as much as you or I: perhaps more than I, a notable sinner and unworthy of the holy office I administer." And this man was purity itself. Villaret had a somewhat sour disposition, tempered by religion. Nature seemed to have made Desert in a kindly mood to be a balm to Society; he was loved for his open face and obliging ways (as my excellent friend Loiseau will be in the sequel); and this priest, so fitted for the ministry of peace and to make Religion loved, had just been suspended on the pretext that he acquiesced in Jansenism! . . . Aubry had a sparkling wit; he had lived loosely, and was neither Jansenist, nor Molinist, nor Christian; a cadet from Normandy he had turned priest for a living. As for Maclegny, a Breton, he was discreet and conformed to those with whom he lived: a Jansenist with us, he spoke as a Jansenist; the same ethics, the same doctrine, the same severity: with Molinists, and with tender consciences, he was gentle and indulgent. One day at confession, I spoke with horror of the sacrifice made to the Devil; and he talked comfortingly of my innocence and little knowledge. Thus encouraged I spoke of Nannette, Julie and Hélène Clou; of Mélanie, Rosalie and Sister or Mother Saint-Augustin, concealing the position of the three last. Maclegny made the sign of the cross, asked how old I was, and then said "that since my first obscene thoughts concerning Nannette, I had been living in a state of mortal sin, and was therefore damned." My Jansenist education made me only too conscious of the truth of what he said, and I fainted. The confessor was obliged to come to my help. . . . When I came to myself, I repeated sobbing: "M. Denates says the same. If I died in this state, should I be damned for ever in M. Aubry's way?" "No," said the startled priest, "if you are really sorry and repent, the sin is venial; contrition changes its nature and it is expunged by pardon." He spoke thus when he realised that I had a scrupulous conscience; but with stubborn natures, such as Brother Charles and Brother François, or stagnant ones, such as Brother Denis, or indolent and futile, such as Brother Ambroise, Maclegny thundered, and it was this that had won the confidence of our master, with whom he played the Jansenist.

The rector and Bonnefoi, as I have said, examined our books, of which I have previously given a list. Maclegny had put one or two aside; but the Abbé Thomas, far from completing the work of concealment, gloried in the opinions indicated by his books; he called this testifying to the truth. The first that Bonnefoi looked at was Rollin's History, which he praised highly. But when he came to the controversial works, he told our master very wisely that such books should not be in a children's library. "It is impossible to know the truth too young!" answered Abbé Thomas. "Do you, a mere tonsured clerk, think to teach us religion?" exclaimed the rector. Silence on the part of our master. "Your opinions are your own concern," said Bonnefoi, "and any pretension to make you change them, save through conviction, would be unjust, tyrannical; but it is the duty of the senior priest, or his delegates, to prevent you from teaching them to your pupils." Passing from book to book, Bonnefoi came at last to the New

Testament of Quesnel, whose mystic and sometimes fantastic interpretations, albeit weighted with Jansenist penetration, I had never liked, though Messire Antoine Foudriat used to read it in church during Lent, at evening prayer. "To use this," said Bonnefoi, "is to go against the express decision of the Church!" "What is it?" asked the rector, and he read the title. With a gesture of horror he flung it to the ground. The Abbé Thomas moved to pick it up; but Bonnefoi was before him, and kneeling kissed the place where it had fallen. Then he addressed the rector in an impressive tone: "Did you reflect, Monsieur, that herein is the complete text of the Gospels? Let us go! You are no longer yourself." And he put the book back in its place. The rector paid no attention to him; and encouraged in his excesses by the Gascon priest, he wanted to take away the New Testament, of which each boy had a copy on the shelf above his place. Then our master raised his voice: "O God," he exclaimed, "they would deprive your children of your word!" We joined our cries to his; and I remember that, in the exaltation of my childish zeal, I, the shy Nicolas, did what the boldest of my companions would not have dared to do, and addressed the rector: "I have been told by my father, whom I believe more than you, that this is the testament of Jesus Christ, our father, and that I ought to read it every day, to know all the benefits that he has left me." "Your father is a Huguenot," said the rector brutally. "He has never missed mass!" I exclaimed in tears; for in the country the word Huguenot is equivalent to *atheist*. Bonnefoi pulled the rector by the arm, whispering: "Your Gascon priest is going to make trouble, Monsieur le Recteur! Let us go, let us go!" Villaret and Desert left at once; the Gascon followed them, turning at the door to say to our master: "You'll be thrown out, you canting humbug, you'll be thrown out!" Bonnefoi heard him, and came back: "Fie, fie, Brother!" he cried. "O Heavens! Is that the way to speak to a priest, a Christian? . . . Come, come! Fie!" And he embraced our master, who embraced him in return. Maclegny spoke some words of comfort, and Aubry, now grown serious, shrugged his shoulders and escaped.

Such was the visit of the Rector, who then proceeded to the dormitories of the poor to make more scenes, carrying terror there instead of consolation. In Saint-Mayeul he found some one to answer him boldly: the assistant-governor, that tender and beloved father of the poor, hearing the Gascon firebrand apostrophising M. Duprat, said to the Rector: "Monsieur, it is about twenty years since I came to this house of sorrow to mingle my tears with those of the unfortunate, and to comfort and succour them according to my powers; only too limited, alas, for their great need. And you, Monsieur, what have you come to do? You, a minister of peace, come to trouble peace, to be a cause for scandal among Christ's poor whom you should edify. I pity you; but my spirit is undaunted! I shall remain here as long as I am able, and only leave when constrained by that authority which should not be resisted. And if, torn from this dormitory, I am thrown into prison, I shall glorify God, and pray for you, and for my poor, and for myself, as I have done here. . . . Your threats are wasted: I fear no one except God; I hate nothing except sin." Bonnefoi, carried away by these words, held out his hand to the assistant governor, with this quotation from the Scriptures: *"Melior es quam me, fili David! Ora pro me ad Dominum Deum nostrum!* I have a weakness for virtue," he added, "if I saw it in the Devil, I would bow down before the Devil." As for the Rector and the Gascon, hard heart and base heart, they withdrew in confusion, after Villaret had whispered that they were in the presence of the assistant-governor; but not without threatening to cleanse the house of heretics. A poor man thought to champion the assistant governor: "So much the worse for us if you cleanse the house of our benefactors! We shall not be any better off!" The Rector, a minister of Jesus Christ and among his poor, shouted: "The Guard!" "What!" exclaimed Bonnefoi, "What are you thinking about! You would make yourself feared, when in our holy ministry we should only make ourselves beloved?" The violent Rector ordered the priest to be silent, and Bonnefoi held his tongue. But the poor man had mingled with the others, and the Rector could not have him arrested by the House Guard; the Gascon indeed pretended to recognise him; but it was proved that the man he pointed out had only just come in. Villaret, the former Rector, dismissed the Guard which had hurried to answer the thundering summons of his successor: "Go! It is not for us to make use of you." His imposing manner and emphatic gesture showed how deeply he was moved. "It is my place to dismiss them," said the Rector. "Monsieur," replied Villaret, "if the poor rebel against the ministers of consolation (which I should have thought impossible) the priest must suffer it, and will gain in merit and respect thereby. There can be no question of using fear in your position; if you are obeyed through fear, you have failed, you have achieved nothing. . . . Forgive my frankness! But I am your senior from every point of view." The Rector and the Gascon left.

From the day of the visitation, the Abbé Thomas saw that he would have to give up his place, and made ready to do so. As the Jansenists had powerful supporters, they were warned of every step taken by the Archbishop. During the week following, Abbé Thomas sent home all children of conscientious parents. For there were some among them who came of good families, and had been confided to Fusier to receive a Jansenist education, and left with his successor when the latter's character had become known. For more than six years our little community had been in demand as a school for the formation of good character.

My dear Fayel was the second to go; for Brother Denis, the eldest of us, had been leaving in any case. Fayel came to bid me goodbye: "I shall never see you again," he said, "I know it, and it costs me a bitter pang. But, dear Brother Augustin, remember throughout our lives and wherever you may be, that somewhere there is a heart which loves you and suffers for your absence! Goodbye, dear Augustin! Never forget me! I will never forget you!" He was holding my hand, and, drawing me into the Infirmary, he pointed to the *Jesus*: "We have been children together here," he said, "and I feel that it will prove to have been the happiest time of our lives. Let us swear before Jesus never to forget it!" We swore, and I have never been false to my oath. . . . Fayel went away, and I have never seen him again. . . . O my friend, if you are still alive, your heart will grow tender as you read these words! Brother Jean-Baptiste came to comfort me; sobbing, we watched Fayel's carriage from the window. But there were still two of us; two days later Poquet left, and I was alone. I wept for my two amiable friends, and there was no one to mitigate my grief. I never saw Poquet again. Even now I can see no reason for the Abbé Thomas's policy in arranging that I should never again see friends I had made while under his direction, and who had so helped me on more than one occasion. May those with whom I then dwelt now understand my heart, and do me justice!

On the seventh day after the rector's visit, my brother was warned that the order for the expulsion of the Jansenists was going to be hurried forward. He was wise to have forestalled it, for, apart from the danger of waiting, it might well include certain distasteful injunctions and a notice to leave within a given time, which would put those who were not well off in the melancholy position of either disobeying the despot or becoming embarrassed beyond their means. As the Abbé Thomas was expecting the warning, everything was ready in two hours. The three of us went out together, my brother, M. Maurice and myself, as if we were going for a walk. It was the 22nd of November, 1747, and my fourteenth birthday. What was our surprise to find that the porter was already in the secret! He said goodbye with tears in his eyes. Two hundred paces further on we found the governor and under-governor of Saint-Mayeul, who presented a purse to my brother. He excused himself from accepting it, but, in a low voice, recommended M. Maurice to them. We all embraced; a chaise took the two governors to the capital, and we followed the road to Vitry.

We were to have surprise after surprise that day. I had noticed a man, who approached from outside the gates, observing us closely when the Abbé Thomas refused the purse. This man had gone off by a path across the fields. Before we reached the main road, which we were obliged to cross, we met him again, muffled in a heavy brown cloak, a black wool wig just showing beneath a sort of hood. He waited until the Abbé and M. Maurice had passed, and then came up to me: "Little friend," he said, "which is the road to Villejuif?" "That one, Monsieur." "My dear child," he said, "I have addressed myself to you rather than to your masters. Take this package; it contains something which may be useful to them. I had meant to send it by Brother Paul or Brother Olivier, but changed my mind. . . . It is something that belongs to them. . . . Take it; they will be grateful to you." I saw that the man was acquainted with us, and took the package after a slight hesitation; as soon as it was in my hands, he went quickly away. After I had watched him a little while, it occurred to me to hurry after my brother. He was frightened when he heard me running and turned round; but when he saw that I was alone, he faced about and walked on so quickly that I could not come up with him until the man was out of sight. "Monsieur," I said, "a man has just given me this packet. I did not dare to call you, but I wish you had waited for me." The Abbé took the packet, which was carefully tied up and sealed; he did not open it, for we were in a hurry to reach our hiding place, but he carried it. He questioned me as we walked: "He looked stout, but I think it was because of his clothes, for his face was thin and pale and his nose sharp. I have heard his voice somewhere, but I cannot say who he is." I repeated word for word all he had said. We were taking refuge with the people who lived next to our house in the country, friends of my brother, and when we arrived there he undid the package. Under ten wrappings, which probably had no other purpose than to delay its opening, we found a roll of fifty louis, of which half were in small écus, and with them a message in an unknown handwriting: *"I could not send it all in gold, but you can change it at your first halt. Do not sleep in your country house, but with one of your friends. . . . Prudentiam! et Valete."*

Our surprise was extreme! We profited by the warning and went at once to the house of two good and devout Jansenists, who took us, under cover of darkness, to a relative of theirs, a bachelor, with whom we stayed for a week without going out.

However, Brother Olivier, who loved his master, followed him to the country house and, not finding us there, he made enquiries of our kind neighbours. These only knew him as a servant, and concealed our retreat until they had ascertained that the Abbé Thomas would be glad to see him. He told us all that had happened at the house since our flight. A new master, who was apparently in readiness, had taken charge on the next day; there were only five children left, and all five from Paris or the neighbourhood. Brother Paterne, a native of Orleans, who had not been sent for, had returned alone to his parents the day after our disappearance, making his escape during the walk. Brothers Ambroise and Frécœur had remained, with three new boys: Brother Martin, son of a Palaiseau mason, Brother Jerome, son of a trooper of the watch in Paris, and Brother Timothée, who had not yet received his cassock at the time of the visitation.

After he had heard the news, Abbé Thomas spoke of the money and the warning, quite certain that both had been sent by some of those good friends of the Governors who, out of affection for Duprat and his like, lived in the house as boarders. Olivier thought for a moment: "How was he dressed?" I was told to describe him again; I forgot nothing. "It was Monsieur Bonnefoi!" exclaimed the honest Olivier. "I saw him myself. I saw him come in, dressed just like that; because I went out a moment after you had left to try if I could see you on the road. But I thought you were in a chaise which I noticed a long way off. I saw M. Bonnefoi come in, and make a sign to the porter who had recognised him; he was wearing a heavy brown cloak, a black wool wig, heavy shoes and Auvergne gaiters. He was seen going out again yesterday in the same dress, doubtless to do some good in secret, for that is his way. . . ." On hearing these words, which put an end to all doubt, Abbé Thomas and M. Maurice fell upon their knees, and I with them. "O God, make him to know the truth!" exclaimed the Abbé. But inwardly I told my little thirteen-year-old self: "He does know it, because he practises brotherly love. . . ." But this is not enough for Jansenists. They sent back the twelve hundred livres. I grieved for it; I told myself that Bonnefoi had not deserved to be refused. I was right. We heard later that Bonnefoi forgave us for having recognised him and exposed him to the disapproval of his superiors. He was driven from the house! O vile bishop! . . . But virtue has its reward. A parliamentary counsellor, related to the under-governor of Saint-Mayeul, and a Jansenist, was so touched by this incident that he appointed Bonnefoi to a benefice which was in his gift. I do not know any more; but this good man could not have been otherwise than happy with a reasonable income to give scope for his benevolence. Thus it was a Jansenist who rewarded virtue in a Molinist and took to himself an almost unprecedented honour, one which might have been so fine an ornament to Christophe de Beaumont.*

After a week at Vitry, Olivier took me to my sister Marie in Paris. The master and his assistant parted company at the same time, never to meet again: everything was broken up. I had adopted a serious manner, inwardly convinced of my surpassing excellence since I had been persecuted for the truth; I considered myself a little confessor of Jesus Christ. I had not lost much, but it was all that I had: eighteen inches of bench and about as much in front of me upon a table; I was dispossessed, I had nothing left, I had lost everything; I was astray, confused, far from my family and with no means of returning to them. . . . Certainly I was persecuted and a little confessor, and I do not see why anyone should laugh

*Saint Augustine would have done it: but Saint Augustine had a soul, which was just what Christophe de Beaumont lacked. This empty-headed prelate rewarded the dissolute Fréron, who made fun of religion while he defended it, and who, for each attack against Voltaire, demanded an order for a thousand écus, which the Archbishop always made for four thousand livres. In private among his friends, this Fréron was an extravagant admirer of the old man of Ferney.

at me! for I was as infatuated as any martyr. Also though I had been brought low and was wretched and insignificant, was I not superior to our blind persecutor?

Such is the story, not without interest perhaps, of my stay among the choir boys of Bicêtre.

During the fortnight that I was staying with him, M. Beaucousin showed me Paris, or rather its Churches; not because he was specially religious, but because he had two brothers-in-law in the service of religion, and he was a mere machine. An incident will prove how well he deserves this epithet. On the eighth of December, the day of the Conception, he took me to Vespers at the Cathedral: the Archbishop officiated. M. Beaucousin looked at him in an ecstasy of admiration, and knelt with everyone else to receive his pastoral benediction when he passed in pomp down the nave. As for me, little Jansenist dissenter that I was, I looked upon Christophe de Beaumont as a bad shepherd who ill-treated his sheep; I saw in him one doomed to damnation; in his pontifical retinue a triumph of the Devil; in himself, an enemy to grace, the persecutor of the Abbé Thomas, the Satan who had separated me from my friends Fayel and Poquet and (though I kept this thought in the depths of my heart, as though I would hide it from God himself) from pretty Sisters Mélanie and Rosalie, to whom I had not even been able to say goodbye. . . . Therefore, regarding him as a heretic, I, alone in all that numerous congregation, would not kneel down. What, bend the knee before a man who displayed a pomp condemned by the Gospels! Who called himself *Monseigneur* despite the prohibition of the Gospels! "Ah," thought I, "only I and my like are Christians; all the rest are heretics!" To the very depths of my excellent rightness and perfect orthodoxy I groaned for the blindness of the prelate.

I was five feet high at that time, so I was conspicuous among the kneeling congregation. An old Parisian asked her neighbour aloud whether I was a little Jew. I looked at her blackly, and said: "I adore God in spirit and in truth, Parisian!" "I'm a Parisian all right, and what of it?"

On our return M. Beaucousin related all that he had seen to my sister, his wife, a tall pretty brunette, serious and dignified, whom he adored. After he had described everything in detail, he exclaimed in admiration: "Ah, what a worthy prelate!" "I would say the same," answered my sister, "if he had not taken away my brother's place." This remark came as a flash of enlightenment to the good Picard! During the whole ceremony he had never thought of that; he was ravished and dazzled by the priest in all his glory; but his wife's remark completely turned him about: "You are right, my beautiful!" he said, as if coming out of a dream, "and I am amazed that I never thought of it; but Nicolas thought for the two of us, for he never knelt down. . . . As a matter of fact I seemed to notice something of the worldly and arrogant about his bearing. He spread himself like a peacock. It was not so with the Apostles. . . . But I have an idea: is it not rather an honour to lose your place through so eminent a prelate?" "In the same way as it is an honour to have your head cut off in virtue of an order signed by the King," replied Marie. "How clever she is," he said, looking at me. "Your family has brains, above all the elder ones. You must try not to fall short of them, little friend Nicolas."

I had nothing to do at my sister's house. There were a few books, which I devoured; among others P. Caussin's *Cour Sainte*, and a moral work, called I think the *Miroir des Passions*. These came from M. Beaucousin's family. They were old but clean, and he never read them for fear of spoiling them. In ten days I had finished the thirty volumes in his library. I asked him for others and he replied, as though he had three thousand: "I have more books than you can read." He brought me two. "I have read those." "Here?" "Here." He brought me all the others in succession, to receive the same answer. He looked at his wife: "I did not know that he could tell a lie." "My friend, find out if he is lying: open the book where you will, begin an incident, and if he can finish it you will know that he has read it." Beaucousin struck his forehead, and embraced his wife. "I should never have thought of that. . . . Let me see, friend Nicolas." He opened P. Caussin at the pretty story about Emma, daughter of Charlemagne, who carried her gallant Eginhard lest his footprints in the snow, fallen during the night, should tell whither he had gone. I repeated the whole of it. He did the same with the *Miroir des Passions*, choosing the tale of the Miser. I related the incident in which, after every possible example of avarice, the miser worthily crowns his life: an apothecary brings him some medicine; the miser disputes the price; the apothecary will not take less than five sous; the miser is just about to pay it, but, as he is groping in his purse, he changes his mind: "Take away your medicine: to die through not having it . . . or . . . to die of regret for having parted with my money. . . . I prefer the former." And he laid his head upon his pillow, resolved to die rather than spend five sous. . . . M. Beaucousin left it at that. "He has read all my books in a week!" he exclaimed. "And I have not read twenty pages in the twenty years I have had them! Come, come; I must borrow some." He brought novels, which my sister deftly removed before I had seen the titles; except for one, and that was Gil Blas: and when I had read a few pages of it, I was so entranced that for a week I had no desire save for this book. But there was no way of getting it back, for Beaucousin, reproved by his wife, became even stricter than she was. But I found compensation, somewhat as it is found on great feast days when the theatres are closed to us.

Since I had been in Paris I had watched with a desirous thrill the pretty women who came to visit my sister. No one knew how experienced I was, especially after my adventure with the two young secretaries! Mme Bossu, a married woman voluptuously dressed up for the 8th,* made me lose my head, and I embraced her ardently at her own house before she realised what she had to do with. I perceived that she was tempted; but she repulsed me in the end, saying: "If you are not good, I shall tell your sister." She never told, however, although I teased her for a long time. . . . But it was a young and pretty negress who roused the most lively sensations in me, for she was something quite new. She was chambermaid to an American lady, and her gentle ways were more seductive than anything I had met with in my life. She had no difficulty in seeing that she was attractive to me. One day, when I was reading alone, she entered my sister's house, and came to read over my shoulder. Her divine smile, which her blackness only made more the affecting, went straight to my heart, recalling a beautiful negress I had seen in an old engraving, *The Toilet of Esther*. Smiling, I raised my eyes to hers, my mouth a little open; she thought that I was asking for a kiss, and pressed her burning lips lightly against mine. I was on fire! In no way restrained by my character as a little confessor of Jesus Christ, a character which had given me a certain aloofness for some time, I took a liberty. Far from defending herself, Esther began to laugh, saying: "My little white boy! My little white boy! I love White and not Black, can you come out?" I told her that I did not want to go out anywhere, but that my sister and brother-in-law would not be

*December 8th, the feast of the Conception.

in for more than half an hour. I saw Esther's eyes sparkle, and she came at me as one beside herself . . . I had some practice and Esther a good deal of theory, and above all she was passionate. "My little white boy," she said, "you shall be the first to have me, for the sake of your pretty sister, whom I love very much; and then afterwards the big black man can marry me if he likes." I will not enter into salacious details, and if I ever do so, it is only because they are absolutely necessary to the end I have set before me. I will only say that, after various attempts, I achieved what she desired. The accident which always happened to me, and which the pretty sisters of Bicêtre liked so much, happened again, and most notably! I fainted. . . . The pretty negress ran away in terror. I came to myself before my sister returned. I repaired my disorder; I was filled with remorse and asked God's pardon with tears.

The temperament when it is weakened, no matter by what cause, returns to its original prejudice. I have always noticed that, during the time of my innocence, it was only an effervescence of energy that made me enterprising. When calmed by satisfied desire, I was filled with compunction. . . . Esther appeared again during the day, but timidly; she was delighted to find me reading. Six days later, on the eve of my departure, we had a similar interview; I fainted again, and thought that God was punishing me. But Esther was much less frightened, and brought me to again. . . . In 1770 we shall see what were the consequences of this adventure.

Finally the Abbé Thomas returned to his own diocese on the invitation of the Curé of Courgis. His brother-in-law sang my praises, but the Abbé strongly disapproved of my being allowed to read the *Cour Sainte*, although he was not acquainted with the Emma incident. This greatly mortified

M. Beaucousin, who set an immense value upon the book. Even my sister found it admirable! But from the moment that her brother had condemned it, it became worthless. This changed point of view had a result that could hardly have been expected: Beaucousin, out of respect for a book in seven octavo volumes, had never read it; but when he no longer valued it, he had it out every day, and spent every moment of leisure in reading it – out of contempt, and derived an inexpressible pleasure from it, for the author's wit was similar in kind to his own. He continued to read it up to the time of his death, often saying with great gravity: "This is a most agreeable poison!"

We took the boat to Auxerre on the 20th or 21st of December. I found it more bearable than on the journey to Paris, for there is plenty of water in the Seine, so that it is not necessary to use the pole. However, we left this tedious vehicle at Sens, after the curé of Sainte-Colombe in that town had met with an accident; he was thrown into the water by the gross carelessness of our steersman. Everyone told me that the misfortune had happened to my master, and I thought he was dead: "At least he will be saved!" I exclaimed. "For he is a confessor of Jesus Christ, and will go straight to Heaven." My simplicity made people laugh, but it also awakened the curiosity of a canon of Auxerre, named Bosq, who questioned me kindly. Happily he was very much of a Jansenist, for I told him everything. Seeing that he was known, my brother disembarked; and with him the canon, and a Jansenist wine merchant of Chablis, M. de Courtives, and myself. The next day we walked for a little and then got lifts in carts; we passed the night at Bassou, and on Sunday morning arrived at Auxerre.

The Abbé Thomas was going to the Petit-Séminaire, which had taken the place of that of the Lazarists, and was in the diocesan Orangery. Here secular masters taught from the rudiments up to theology. The Jesuits directed the College, but only those young people went to them who were not proposing to take orders. It was Christmas Eve, and my brother, who had been a boarder there, was received as a confessor of Jesus Christ. He was given a big room, and myself a little one. But I was taken with so violent a fit of shyness that I could never bring myself to the point of joining the Seminarists in the refectory. The scullions brought me something to eat by myself. The day after the feast I went to Courgis with Marguerite Pâris, the Curé's housekeeper, who had been sent to fetch me.

Thus ends my *Second Epoch*, and nothing has been omitted from it. We now come to the *Third*, which contains the first real development of my passions; an important epoch upon which all the rest of my life has doubtless hinged! This part of my story must be followed attentively.

END OF THE SECOND EPOCH

THIRD EPOCH

LOVE
AND MY STAY AT
COURGIS

1748-1752

THIRD EPOCH

Love, and My Stay at Courgis

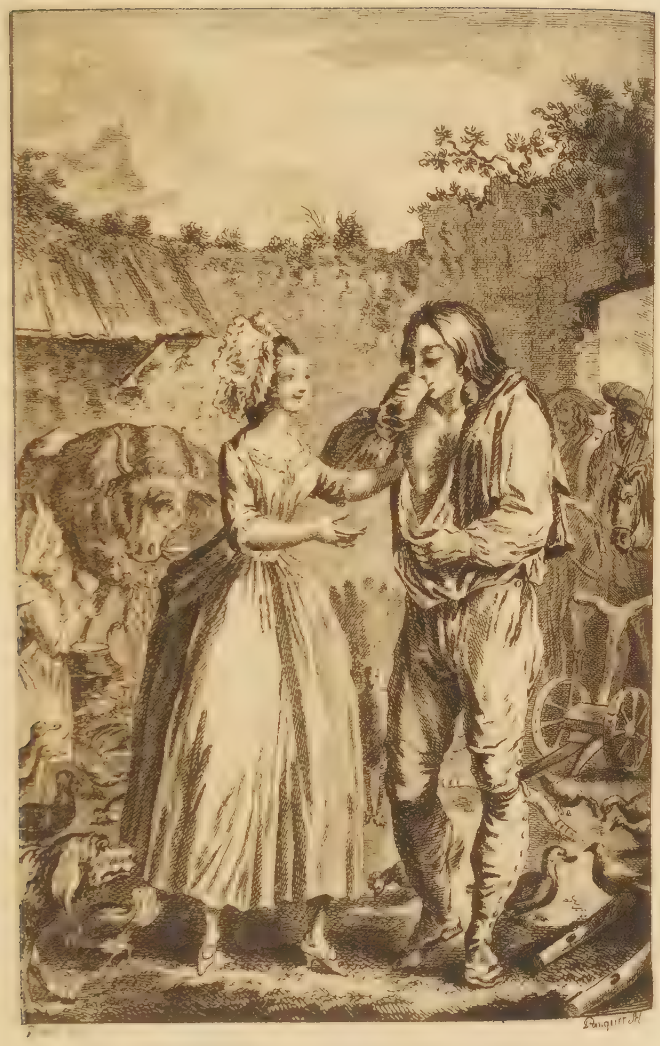
1748 – 1752

Tantum Relligio potuit suadere malorum!
LUCRET.

KOURGIS or Courgis, to which I came on the 29th of December, stands among vineyards on the slope of a barren, waterless hill. It is a quarter of a league from Préhy, a league from Chablis, one from Beine, two from Quenne, three from Auxerre, one from Chitry and one from Saint-Cyr-les-Colons. Half a league to the south, there is a spring of excellent water, the fountain of Ecueilly, and to the north there is another of which the water is icy. Courgis was my second home, Auxerre my third, and Paris will be my tomb. . . .

My elder brother and godfather received me kindly, and the good chaplain, Monsieur Foynat, with every sign of affection. I was told that I was to stay at Courgis while I learnt the elements of Latin from my brothers, and then enter the seminary under M. Viel, canon and superintendent. This prospect pleased me, for I was not so uncouth as to want to remain ignorant. The Abbé Thomas was spending a few days at the seminary to receive minor orders, and only arrived the day after Twelfth Night. His coming produced some change in the Curé's goodwill towards me, and he thenceforward treated me with indifference: either because his younger brother did me some disservice with him for reasons of which I am ignorant, or because this was his more natural attitude. However, I was set to work on Latin, after we had paid a visit to my father and mother.

My heart beat for joy as we set out. As we entered the Sacy country, after having passed Laloge, I gazed over the district known as Les Sorbiers, doubtless because in former times it was covered with mountain ash trees; the peasants were very fond of this coarse fruit, and made a rape wine of it called sorb-apple wine, and this was their usual drink until the vine was introduced, a recent innovation at Sacy. At sight of these villages the very depths of my self were stirred, but I was not prepared for the sad tenderness that flooded me. I had been talking, but now my tongue was tied; I dropped behind. My heart leapt when the dear hills of Pilet and Côte-Grêle came into sight and the tears flowed; hidden by intervening thickets, I fell on my knees and kissed my natal earth. . . . The Abbé Thomas called me. I went forward: Vaudenjean and La Farge lay before me, and Triomfraid and Bout-parc, behind which lay my valley. I knelt down again, and praised God. Summoned a second time, I joined the Abbé Thomas without seeing him, my streaming eyes fixed on the unfolding landscape. He asked why I had not come when he called. I did not answer his question; but pointed over the country where I had shepherded the flocks, saying: "Monsieur, there is Pilet; and that is Maurepos, where Jacquot showed me a crested lark's nest during his first year as our shepherd. I used to go and see it every day. It was in the shadow of a great thistle; there were five eggs" (I choked, as if I were relating some most affecting incident). . . . "I did not take any of the little ones. I let them all live: except for one that was hurt which I used" (I stopped, not daring to


Dauquet Sc

say that I had offered up a sacrifice on a heap of stones, building an altar on top of the largest of them, for I feared that the Abbé would accuse me of sacrilege). I went on showing him the different pastures, and relating all that I had seen on each while watching the flocks: birds of prey, hares, foxes, wolves, partridges, birds' nests. The Abbé, who took after the Dondènes, had not the imagination to understand. Only the Curé and Marie, of the seven children by the first marriage, could have done so: "I suppose," he said, "as you are weeping that it is all very beautiful and touching; but we are drawing near to Sacy; let us say Sext before we get there." "Ah, there is the cemetery!" I interrupted. At this moment we were joined by a man, who was leaving his vineyard with his basket on his back: it was Jean Pyot, the weaver, a maternal cousin of the Abbé's. "Good day, cousin," he said, "I hear that you've come from Paris?" "That is true, cousin." "Did you know that cousin Jean Pyot, called Jean the marshal, is dead?" "No, cousin." "Oh, yes, he's dead, and his teeth have come out on top of his grave." "What! his teeth come out on top of his grave?" "You don't know what that means!" "No, indeed!" "You have heard that he did not speak properly to his father and mother, and how he cursed sometimes, and how he swore at his mother once, and beat his two sisters Marguerite and Madelène?" "No, I had heard nothing about it." "Well, he beat them, and his mother a little, and he has just died. And his father and mother have wept bitterly for him! For they say: 'He was a great grief to us because he was bad; but the good God is kind, perhaps he will have pity on him! . . .' And then one day some of the big girls from round about, who had gone to look for violets, were sitting on his grave, and found two of his teeth, and ran away screaming. But his father and mother heard about it all right; a hare-brained youngster went and told them. Father and mother ran to the grave, and saw the teeth, and began to shout and cry: 'Hullo there, God! Hullo there, God! is our poor boy damned?' . . . They made such a noise that M. le Curé came and took them to his own house." "That is all just a superstition, cousin Jean Pyot!" "Oh, so much the better then!" said the good Saxiate. The Abbé Thomas began to recite Sext, and I gave the responses.

I cannot express my rapture at seeing my father's house again. And though all the attentions were for the Abbé Thomas, as was my mother's practice on these occasions, I was pleased rather than jealous. I was content with my lot: I was treated as a child of the house, for whom no one puts himself out. Besides, he was to be my master and I was delighted that he should be favourably disposed towards me. And pure pleasure was waiting for me: a visit to the sheep, the bees, the garden and the meadow; the sight of my pear tree and of the Près-des-Rôs, etc. This little excursion was an exquisite experience, and the same sensations have been renewed in me even in middle age, on each visit that I have made to Sacy. We only stayed for one night, as the Abbé Thomas did not like being in my father's house; we left again on the second day after dinner.

On the day after our return from Sacy, I began to learn my *Rudiment*. It is a hard discipline, discouraging, daunting. . . . Some method of making it attractive should be found to help the young beginner to surmount the first difficulties. I, who had never shied away from work or effort, began to regret the liberty and idleness of my early years. One day I confided my troubles to the kind chaplain, M. Foynat; and instead of meeting me with encouraging trivialities, he told me a little story: "A beginner," he said, "was studying the elements at Chablis under his uncle, a canon. Now it happened one day that the canon's worthy housekeeper wanted to excite the nephew's compassion on behalf of a poor carter who, with a family to support, bore the burden and the heat of the day. 'Is he learning Latin?' asked the student. 'Latin! What are you thinking of! A poor man!' 'He is not learning Latin! Then go and tell him, my good woman, that if he will take my place, I will take his; for I have a hundred times more trouble than he has.'" This little story gave me courage, because there was glory in overcoming something that was really difficult. But if the beginnings were difficult, what followed after held pleasures which happily I was able to appreciate; and once well started, the greatest punishment that could have been inflicted upon me would have been to stop me.

Two of my old schoolfellows arrived during the Carnival: Brother Charles Huet and Brother François Melin, now called just Huet and Melin. They were not to learn Latin: some rich Jansenists, patrons of their parents, were having them educated, but did not want them to emerge from the artisan class to which they belonged. Fools, who by making them sectaries instructed them in argument, for ever the foe of labour! So I was the only one who learned Latin, because my father had insisted upon it. The Abbé Thomas only taught me against his will (I am obliged to tell the truth). Apart from the fact that he had the natural jealousy and mean envy common to peasants, to whom he belonged through his mother, there is a difference between the Jansenists and the Molinists which possibly no one has yet noticed: the former are hostile to the knowledges they term profane; they want one to learn and be acquainted with religion only. The latter, on the contrary, forbid the reading of Holy Writ and all profound study of religion; but they eagerly open the door to all secular knowledge. I leave the wise reader to decide which of the two is to be preferred.

As I have said, I found my work dispiriting at the beginning; but the more repugnance I showed the more were my brothers set on forcing me to learn. If my conduct had been guided by subtlety, I could not have been more subtle! But my attitude was natural. Soon liking and, more important, comprehension (both quickened by love), came to me and I worked without pressure.

The method prescribed by my eldest brother was excellent. When I had learned the rules, I was compelled, as I showed some intelligence, to compose my own exercises in French, adapting each phrase to the rules in my syntax books as I followed these step by step. I applied them one after the other in the order in which they occurred in Valard's rudiment, by incorporating them in sentences. It is obvious how this method favoured the development of judgment! For my reading, I was given Rollin's Ancient History, and I would often turn ten pages into Latin in a single morning. I construed the *Selectae*, then P. Jouvency's *Appendix de Diis*. I found the latter very difficult, but my curiosity was excited by a subject completely new to me and I devoured the difficulties: I guessed at what I could not understand. Then I read Virgil's *Eclogues*. I remember that I could not understand the second eclogue at all, and asked the Abbé Thomas to explain it. He did so quite simply, adding that poets often made use of high-flown expressions. However I disliked this eclogue, and nothing in my heart gave me the key to it. Then I construed the *Fables* of Phaedrus. The Abbé Thomas had a Latin-French copy which he kept carefully locked away. He would read me a fable in Latin; then, when my translation was finished, I read this to him, and he corrected it by reading the French, phrase by phrase from his book. After this he would dictate a whole fable in French for me to turn into Latin. Again the method was the same: I read my version; and the Abbé corrected me by reading the Latin of Phaedrus. In the *Lion and the Ass* I remember translating *"Ears"* by *Aures*, and hearing the diminutive form *Auriculas** with great surprise. Simple and straightforward, I could not get over this! It was on this occasion that the Abbé Thomas introduced me to *irony*; I thought it an ingenious figure, but it did not appeal to me as it was expected to, and I still do not like it.

I will not enter into the tedious and useless detail of my studies. Suffice it to say that I owe the development and clarifying of my ideas to the Latin tongue: it taught me the proper meaning of words, which before I had used parrot-wise. I need not speak of Greek because, as the Romans took their art terms from the tongue of the Athenians, the necessity for some knowledge of it in the study of the language of ancient Rome is obvious: indeed for the proper understanding of French, we need to know the formation of a number of compound words of Greek origin; for this beautiful language is more flexible and assimilable than any modern language. To give one or two examples of such compounds, and of double words which we habitually borrow from the Greek: theologian, philosopher, misanthropist, philanthropist, apology, bigamy, cacophany, gamalogy, gynæceum, astronomy, astrology, didactic, euphony, heresy, physics, iconoclast, hierarchy, lyceum, lymph, mystery, nymph, economy, ornithology, pentameter, pyrolatry, pyramid, pyrites, rhythm, rhinoceros, symmetry, sympathy, symptom, syrup, system, theatre, theory, thermometer, tympan, type, zeal, etc., etc. Directly I could understand Latin a

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* *Venari, asello comite, quum vellet leo,*
Contexit illum frutice, et admonuit simul
Ut insueta voce terreret feras,
Fugientes ipse exciperet. Hic auriculas,
Clamoreque subito, tollit totis viribus . . . etc.

little, I learned to read Greek for myself, in order to trace the roots of these words to their source. However, my studies did not go very far, as we shall see; I encountered insurmountable obstacles! . . . But to go back a little.

I had already become aware of my inclination towards women; Marie Fouard had engaged my affections, but with her I had envisaged a peasant establishment. Nannette had only appealed to the senses; Julie to my heart; Ursule to my sense of the fitting; Edmée Boissard had roused my admiration; Mélanie and Rosalie had been provocative; Esther had had a flavour of the new and astonishing. But it was in Courgis that I experienced true love. It was in this town that my manhood developed in all its fullness. I was warm hearted and bashful, but too ardent to be faithful.

I had been at Courgis three and a half months, that is to say, up to the festival of Easter, and none of the girls that I had seen had been able to make me quite forget Julie. During this time, my body had completed its development; and my imagination, inflamed by a new faculty, worked harder than ever. Still fresh and pure, it made a lovely model for me, endowed with every perfection of mind and heart, and set it before me continually as the source of my happiness. This ideal was not like any of the girls I had yet seen; but it had something of Marie Fouard, of Julie Barbier, of Edmée Boissard, of Ursule Simon; and especially of Marie-Jeanne, a beauty of Laloge: only it was more perfect than them all. . . . On Easter Sunday my soul was exalted by grandeur and solemnity: the girls had on their most beautiful clothes; the temple was perfumed with lavish incense; High Mass, celebrated with deacon and sub-deacon (the worthy chaplain and Abbé Thomas), was of imposing majesty; I was intoxicated. At the offertory I watched the file of young communicants, among whom the prettiest, to my eyes, were young Nolin, fresh and like a rose, the daughter of a pretty mother; Mme. Chevrier, a young married woman without children; and Marguerite's god-daughter and cousin, Marianne Taboué, at sight of whom I trembled, for she came near to my ideal. At last the moment for communion arrived; and, after the men had withdrawn, I watched first the women and then the young girls advance; and, among the latter, was one whom I had not yet seen, and who eclipsed them all. She was modest and beautiful and tall; and there was something virginal about her; she had but little colour, surely to enhance the brilliance of the blush of modesty, and to accentuate her innocence. She was formed like the Nymphs, dressed with more taste than her companions and, in particular, she had that all-powerful charm which I could never resist, a pretty foot. Her bearing, her beauty, her taste, her attire, her virgin colouring – all realised the adorable chimera of my imagination. . . . "It is herself! There she is!" I said half aloud, for the thought was too vivid for me not to utter it. She engrossed the whole of my attention, the whole of my heart, the whole of my mind and soul; all my thoughts, all my desires; I saw no one but her. . . . I did not know her name. Mass came to an end. I went out. The celestial beauty was walking some paces in front of me; Marguerite Pâris accosted her: "Good-day, Mademoiselle Rousseau!" and she embraced her, adding: "My dear Jeannette, in mind as in body, you are an angel. . . . You were not at the offertory?" "I had gone to my grandmother to give her something to drink," answered a voice as sweet as the lovely face.

Fellow-citizen and reader! This Jeannette Rousseau, this angel had unconsciously decided my fate. Think not for a moment that I could have laboured and surmounted every difficulty through courage and a stout heart! No, I have always been faint-hearted; but I was inspired by a real love, which raised me above myself and made me pass for resolute. I persevered; I conquered disinclination and vanquished obstacles, because Jeannette Rousseau had filled my heart with an immortal love. I have done everything to become worthy of this girl, whom I have never possessed, to whom I have never spoken; whose name, at sixty, makes me tremble, after forty-six years of absence, during which I have never had the courage even to dare to ask news of her; whom I am always conscious of adoring in spite of what you are going to read; of whose . . . death I dread to hear as of the greatest misfortune. . . . Yes, her death would extinguish what remains of my energy. I love to think that she is alive and sometimes hears tell of me, and that she has never married! I hope . . . (alas, can I so flatter myself?) that some day she will see this *unveiled heart* of mine . . . and that she will say: "He loved me; he has always loved me!" Pity me, Reader! Barbarians have ravished my happiness! They have poisoned my life with a slow poison which I carry forever in my breast! At this very moment my soul, bowed down within a weakened body, reaches out towards the girl whose heart strengthens mine! Oh adored Jeannette! . . . What have you said, what have you thought about the man who never spoke to you, whose feelings you only knew through ardent glances and one letter? . . . But you were acquainted with those two men who counted natural sentiment as a crime, those executioners of their father's son, who destroyed me as a sacrifice to the idol of their imbecile superstition!

From the moment that I saw Jeannette I thought of no one but her. For the rest of the day, during Catechism and at Vespers, I sought for her, and found her again during the Censing of the Magnificat, when those in the choir turn towards the nave. Her place was near the stoup* by the

*This holy water stoup, cut in a large block of stone, has now been replaced by a smaller one fastened to the wall, but is said still to exist in another part of the church. [Ed.]

side door which faced the Presbytery. At Evening Prayer, when we always had an Exhortation, I turned towards the preacher, but saw no one except the modest and beautiful Jeannette. . . . The impression she left on me was even more vivid next morning. I did two things. I resolved to make myself worthy of Jeannette by application to my books; and thereafter my most fervent prayer in church was always this: *Unam petii a Domino, et hanc requiram omnibus diebus vitae meae*: (I ask but one thing of the Lord, and this I shall seek all the days of my life). I had no idea then how true were these words! For I do not think one day has passed in forty-six years on which the name of Jeannette Rousseau has not been uttered, with a sad sigh, by the man who loved her more than it is possible to love, who has never spoken to her, who has never known what became of her: whether she married or remained single; whether she is a widow, whether she has children, whether she is still alive or whether she has paid her debt to nature.*

I went every day to church; my eyes sought only for Jeannette and I was happy from the moment that I saw her. If she did not appear for several days, my courage grew faint, my taste for study slackened; I became less reserved, more disposed to play with my companions, less chaste in thought.

*On the 4th of June, 1788, I at last had news of Jeannette Rousseau through my sister Margot, who lived in Courgis for nearly a year, after she had lost her husband and left her jeweller's shop on the Quai de Gèvres. This is what she told me: Mlle Rousseau never married. An honest family of Clermont-en-Auvergne engaged her as governess, and she brought up their children. These good people were rich and thought very highly of her; but, after they died, her pupils did not show the gratitude that they should have felt; and this disillusioned Mlle Rousseau and decided her to end her days in Courgis. Thus while I passed from one doubtful adventure to another, Jeannette led an innocent life; while I was trying to win fame, she was practising the domestic virtues. However, she had had news of me: and I think that a letter which I received from Auvergne concerning the *Vie de Mon Père*, in which Jeannette was mentioned, was written at her request by one of my brother's pupils. I never answered it, as I certainly should have done if I had known that Jeannette. . . . I have heard nothing more of her since 1788.

Other girls of the neighbourhood, such as Marianne Taboué, Nannette Bourdillat, Agathe Adine and pretty Mme. Chevrier, aroused – not tenderness, but such desires as had Nannette of Percy-le-Sec; my heated imagination strayed among ideas of pleasure. . . . But Jeannette had only to reappear like a radiant sun, and all unchaste images were driven out, leaving nothing in my mind but a sentiment – tender to excess, indeed, and ardent and impetuous, but pure as her own heart. Then my mind soared again, and I blushed for my negligences. O Jeannette, child of Heaven (for beauty is the work of Divine grace), if I had seen you every day, if the courage you gave me had been seconded by the good will of my masters, I should have become as great as *Voltaire* and left Rousseau far behind! You enlarged my soul: I was no longer myself, but an active, ardent spirit, sharing the genius of the Gods! . . . The effect of seeing Jeannette was always the same throughout my time at Courgis.

But if I was too long deprived of the sight of her, it was enough for her to be mentioned in my presence to renew my virtue, and this happened many times; for Marguerite Pâris was very fond of Mlle Rousseau, and spoke of her often enough. The first time I heard her mention Jeannette, I had not yet come to a complete understanding of my heart. Marguerite, the Abbé Thomas and Sister Pinon were talking about different people, and the housekeeper, after she had said that her god-daughter, though the tallest girl in the town, was only sixteen, added: "I am connected in some way with the two most amiable girls in Courgis: Marianne Taboué is my cousin and god-daughter; and I might have been Jeannette Rousseau's mother, seeing that her father sought me in marriage. . . ." Scarcely had I heard the name *Jeannette*, than I blushed, and knew not where to turn. . . . Happily I was alone at my little table, near the window on to the courtyard, and no one was near enough to notice my emotion. I was fond enough of Marguerite already, with her sweet cleanliness, but her connection with Jeannette doubled her value in my eyes. I listened to the rest of the conversation – not hungrily, but with fear and a trembling heart: I was afraid lest the name *Jeannette* should be repeated, as one fears the return of a too poignant pleasure. But no sooner had the three separated, than a burning zeal for work consumed me: it was as though I said to myself: "Courage! make yourself worthy of this treasure! What happiness if you could be her husband some day; become important to her, dear to her, see her tremble for your life!" And I worked with the concentration of a man of forty.

On the morrow, I found myself alone for a time, the Curé, the Abbé and my two schoolfellows having gone to the curial field which was being sown; and it came into my head to search through the Parish Registers for the entry of Jeannette's baptism. I judged of her age by the soft contours of her face rather than by her seeming maturity; I was fourteen and supposed her to be two years older; but I had to go back beyond 1732. I was not long in finding what I wanted, and it was (is it credible?) an exquisite pleasure just to read the following entry:

*On the nineteenth of December 1731, Jeanne Rousseau, legitimate daughter of Jean and of Marguerite Stallin, her father and mother: who was baptised the same day by me, the under-signed priest, Curé of Courgis, in the Diocese of Auxerre and the department of Villeneuve-le-Roi. God-father, Jean-Ambroise Stallin, maternal grandfather; god-mother, Jeanne-Geneviève Denèvres, paternal grandmother. Whose signatures are appended: Juliot, priest and curé; J.-A. Stallin; J.-G. Denèvres.**

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*Restif was writing from memory, half a century afterwards, and a number of errors have been detected in his version of this entry in the register, which states the occupation of Jeannette's father as notary and schoolmaster of Courgis, and gives the day of her birth as the 17th December. [Ed.]

I re-read this twenty times. It had an inexpressible charm for me; I weighed every word, every syllable, and each seemed interesting and affecting; the *nineteenth of December* became a sacred day for me. . . . A noise made me relinquish my dear book precipitately. . . . My brothers and my schoolfellows had returned. I set to work zealously; but an unlucky thought spoiled everything and, by filling me with alarm, annihilated all my joy. Jeannette was nearly three years older than I, who was born on the 22nd of November, 1734; she was tall and pretty (beauty personified to me, who would have crowned her queen); she was the daughter of a highly esteemed father. Would not some one ask for her hand, and fling me into despair?

. . . Medio de fonte leporum
Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis faucibus angat.

Thus are all our pleasures mixed with pain . . . as though to comfort us for nothingness and death! . . . I noted the precious date upon my tablets in these words: *Fœlix dies decimanona Decembris* 1731, *natalis fuit pulcherrimæ puellæ Johannæ Russicæ mihi carissimæ.* (This was my first composition.) These tablets were as a talisman to me, so carefully did I guard them: they stimulated my courage when it flagged. I would hide away to look at them, and Jeannette's name gave me new strength to work and learn, and to cultivate all the virtues.*

While I was at Courgis, I often went into the country to do errands for my brothers. Also we each went in turn to Saint-Cyr on Sunday mornings, to fetch a provision of meat for the week. Of all my little journeys, this one was the pleasantest. In Winter I made it after dinner on the Saturday, and

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*It was the memory of how love fostered all that was best in me, that led me, in 1777, to write *Le Nouvel Abailard ou l'Amour par lettres,* to show that Love, which is usually harmful to the character, can be a means of developing virtue in either sex.

thus ended the labours of the week; but in summer I started at two o'clock on Sunday morning. As I left Courgis and turned eastwards to Saint-Cyr, I saw the rosy-fingered dawn opening the gates of day. I had time to cross a narrow but very steep valley, in which Jeannette's father had some poplars watered by a stream from the cold spring. I love these tall trees passionately; and those belonged to Jeannette. I saluted them; they imbued me with her life, and I climbed the steeper slope opposite, my heart filled with a sweet melancholy. The higher I went the more freely did I breathe; emancipated from matter, I reached the summit and, in that enchanted moment – the most beautiful of the day, when waking nature smiles upon its author, borrowing the songs of birds for self expression – drunk with love and youth and hope, I saw the sun cut by the horizon offer me the half of his radiant disc. My heart throbbing with emotion, I fell upon my knees, struck down by too many sensations in the same moment: *"Unam petii a Domino,"* I cried, *"et hanc requiram omnibus diebus vitæ meæ.* Oh Sun, how beautiful you are! Eye of God, how beautiful you are!" and remained thus without moving for a time. Then I rose up, jumping for joy: "Ah, if Jeannette were here, I should have everything that is most lovely in nature! . . ." Exquisite moment! One must be young and in love to feel the full charm of a beautiful sunrise! . . . For the rest of the way my mind was occupied with what, in my Note Books, I have called a pleasant fantasy. I thought of Jeannette and imagined that I was ten years older, and had worked and won a position, and become an advantageous match for her, and that I presented myself to ask for her in marriage. I won her. . . . But my fantasies about her were never such as I sometimes wove about other girls – for, in my frequent lapses into despair of ever obtaining Jeannette, I used to fall back on others, such as Marianne

Taboué, the pink-cheeked Nolin, a certain Adine, young Bourdillat; and I even imagined Madame Chevrier a widow and I her husband. . . . All these fantasies ended in marriage; but although they were not without a certain sweetness, they left a trail of lassitude, disgust, and remorse; whereas when Jeannette was heroine, they only grew more exquisite after marriage. I was the husband of a darling girl, who loved me and was herself beloved; and we had children as charming as herself. A few unfounded suspicions and trifling quarrels only refreshed our tenderness, because there was never any real fault. I worked; I succeeded, and made their life a happy one, thus crowning their mother's joy. I always pursued my dreams concerning Jeannette into old age. Nothing could weaken my love for this dear wife; I adored and caressed her in youth; I adored and respected her in age. I pictured my daughters as beautiful as herself. I married them, after we had enjoyed the respectful approaches of our future sons-in-law together. We also married our sons; and I added to my satisfaction by giving myself the children of those who most attracted me after Jeannette for daughters-in-law. . . . When I reached the presbytery of Saint-Cyr (for the Prior sent a mounted servant to fetch our meat with his from Irancy), I emerged with difficulty from my fantasy, and, on my return homewards with my burden, it began again. But as I drew near Courgis a new rapture possessed me, for at High Mass I was going to see this very Jeannette who had so exquisitely engaged my fancy.

What pleasure, what intoxication, what indescribable ecstasy to see her who had so deliciously filled my heart all the morning; whose image had interpenetrated the charm of nature at its rising to usher in a fine day! Thus my rapture was increased; and love, happiness, marriage, paternity – these illusions blended together and took shape around a single object, Jeannette; she bound them all together, and the charm that she laid over the whole of nature will only end with my last breath.

Another journey that I sometimes made, and a still more agreeable one, was to my father's house. I loved and cherished my parents, and was loved by them; nor was this sentiment weakened by my worship of Jeannette; for she who was the source of every virtue necessarily inspired them all. . . . No, I have not forgotten her! Colette, the heavenly Colette, was the same in heart and beauty. It was always nature's Woman that I adored! . . . The first time I went home I was not yet acquainted with Jeannette; therefore my ecstatic joy, increasing with every step that brought me nearer Sacy, had but the one cause. But on the second occasion, alone and free in the solitudes between Puits-Debond and Sacy, and with a heart enlarged by love, I experienced the most poignant emotions, which melted into tenderness at the sight of the hills where I had been shepherd. I cried aloud, not as a man cries, but inarticulately as an animal, and falling on my knees I kissed my native soil. I rose, my face bathed in tears and repeated over and over again: *Unam petii a Domino, et hanc requiram omnibus diebus vitæ meæ.*

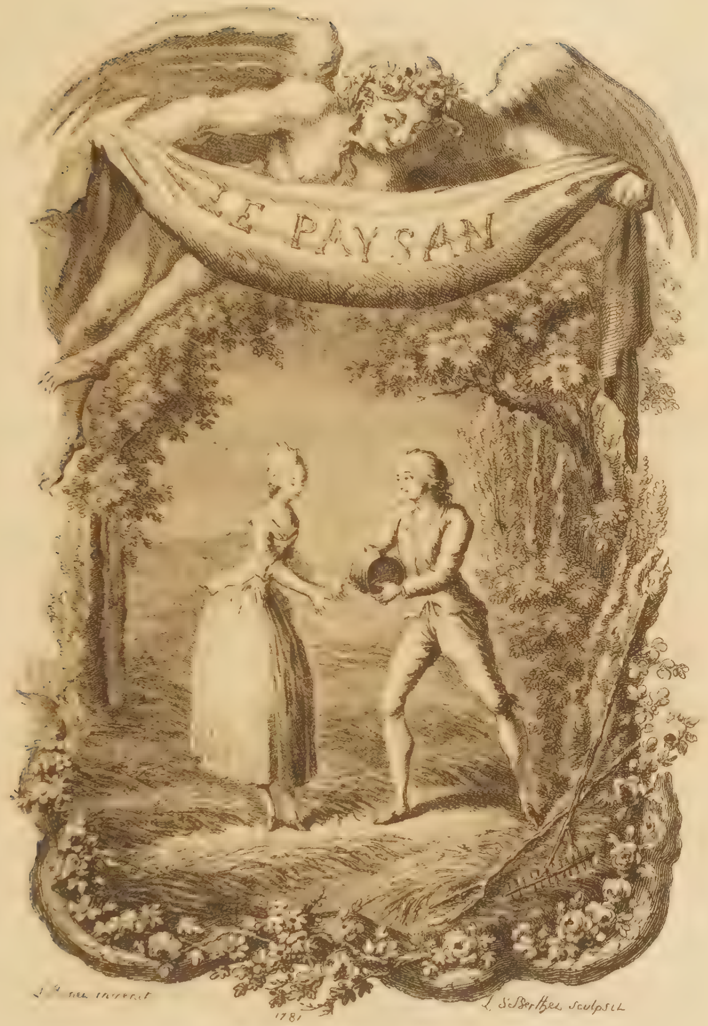
Arrived at la Bretonne, I entered into possession of my country, and in the fine season gave myself up to its enjoyment. The evening was devoted to my father and mother, and I told them everything that they did not already know. On the next day I went out directly after breakfast. First I visited the church and recalled the years of my childhood, then the Curé, Messire Antoine, who asked me a great many questions about my brothers, now somewhat estranged from him. Next I hurried to my nurse, Lolive, who always greeted me with delight; and then I walked all round the pastures. I visited the places where I had been happiest, thinking of Jeannette, but not consecutively, moved to tenderness by everything, weeping for joy, or just with emotion. . . . But I did not go as far as my old kingdom, that dear valley where I had reigned; it was in my destiny never to see it again.

(Ah, if I could see the ruins of my pyramid once more, if I could gather all those left of my old friends beneath the pear trees, I should die there of emotion! . . . – 14th June, 1793.)

It was on such an occasion that I had the adventure with a neighbour at la Bretonne to which I have already referred; an adventure about which I cannot keep silence, though it may bring upon me the accusation of being *immoral* (a new word, which I hear re-echoing on every side to-day), since I must be truthful, or nothing. I have mentioned a girl called Marguerite Miné, who lived in the end house of the town on the la Bretonne side. We had always spoken to each other, like good neighbours. As I was at Sacy for more than a week, because I was having a suit made for me, I had occasion to see Marguerite. I had been told at home that she was going to marry Covin the soldier, a tall, well set-up rascal, and something of a loud-mouthed fop. Marguerite was pretty, and the marriage was one of inclination on M. Covin's side, for he was the richer: that is to say, Marguerite had tilth to the value of about a hundred and twenty livres, and Covin land and vineyards worth about six hundred; thus, at about twenty livres the acre, he would have fifteen or sixteen acres, together with an acre of vines and some pastures scattered over the grassland. He would grow six acres of wheat and six of barley or oats, and six would lie fallow; and the tillage of this should bring in enough for food. The acre of vines would cover tallage and drink, and put a few sous in the husband's pocket. Marguerite had the profit on her spinning, the wool from seven or eight sheep, the eggs from a dozen hens, the milk of a cow and the butter and cheese that she could make from this. Covin had his house and garden. I enter into these details to give an idea, once and for all, of the fortune of an ordinary peasant in Sacy, as well as in all Lower Burgundy; and to show how easily I might have been happy in that estate. Some were a little poorer, some a little richer: my father, for instance, had landed property to the value of about fifty thousand livres, in Sacy, Nitry and Accolay (I got six thousand for my thirteenth share, the values having increased since his death); Monsieur Rameau, to the value of more than a hundred and fifty thousand! Thomas Piot, to about six thousand, and so on. But the majority were as Covin. With five hundred livres' worth of land a farmer could live in our country; with less, he was in want; with double, he was comfortable. But Covin was a weaver as well, and his wife could work with him; so that her lot should have been a pleasant one enough. Add that he had a sister, who was the pastor's housekeeper, and owned as much in land as himself, and was amassing a little store of savings, which he would naturally inherit, and Marguerite Miné was really making an excellent marriage. Nor did she escape envy! It was two days before her marriage, when she was full of joy and hope, that I accosted her.

"Good day, Marguerite! So you are going to be married?" "Yes, M. Nicolas." "You are very happy?" "Well, I am not grieving!" "Marguerite . . . you know we have always been friends?" "Yes, M. Nicolas, and are so still." "I do so want you to do me a favour!" "Gladly, M. Nicolas; I am your nearest neighbour." "You are getting married; you will know what marriage is . . . will you tell me all about it?" "I would not tell anyone else," answered Marguerite, "but I will tell you." Then we changed the conversation. . . . Marguerite was married two days later in black; for it is the custom in all country districts that the wedding dress should serve for mourning without any change, should one of the two die; the only difference is that the bride wears ribbons on her bib and a rose sash. The young girls, or nymphs, wear ribbons on their bibs only, and are dressed in colour or in white according to the clothes that they possess. I saw Marguerite married, and I thought she looked very pretty!

This was on Tuesday. I remained in Sacy until the Wednesday of the following week. On Sunday, the hay from the la Bretonne field, which had been cut on Friday and Saturday, was made and stacked. It was customary to invite all the young people to the haymaking, and the stacking of it in lofts which adjoined the field. This pleasure party was held on Sunday after Vespers, which the pastor was kind enough to say earlier. My mother, who had been busy with preparations all the week, regaled us on milk curds and *galotes*, little bits of paste kneaded in milk and cooked in a kind of porridge – an excellent dish, because it is satisfying even in a country of devouring appetites. Marguerite's festival Sunday was postponed to the following week, on account of the haymaking, to which she came with all the Youth of the village. I bore her faithful company. When the work was finished, I went to fetch her a bowl of milk and a panful of *galotes*; then we sat down side by side in the hay-loft, and as she ate,we talked. I repeated the request that I had already made. "Gladly," she answered, as on the first occasion and with an innocence which still astounds me, "for I have always been fond of you; but you were not made for me, nor I for you. See if there is anyone in the loft." "No one: the boys and girls and your husband are all eating." We were in a retired place. "I want to teach you everything," she said. (I am sure that she was perfectly innocent: I have had proofs of it since; but for myself, with my pretended ignorance, my piety, and the love of another in my heart, I was trebly guilty.) . . . I expected a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purely verbal description, and it was a practical demonstration that Marguerite entered upon! I was amazed! but my senses carried me beyond surprise. It was a first move towards depravity thus to allow myself to be led step by step along the path of pleasure. Marguerite took me from point to point up to the climax, which was more enjoyable than any that had preceded it. I was in an ecstasy of happiness – could one believe it? – in the thought of Jeannette! "Anyway, I am a man! and I shall never have to be ashamed of myself again!" For Rosalie and Mélanie had laughed at me, although they were by no means displeased by the accident from which they profited.

However, I could only have one lesson. As soon as I was myself again, Marguerite left by way of the field, and I by the courtyard; she skilfully rejoined her husband just at the moment when, his appetite satisfied, he was beginning to get anxious about her. She told him that she had just finished arranging something with me, and had already eaten.

Nevertheless I had not enjoyed all the pleasure that might be imagined; the convulsion was as yet far too violent, and what I experienced was near to pain. Also, far as such precocious exploits might have conducted me towards debauchery, I think they really turned me from it. I did not find women less desirable, but my heart was more moved than my senses; above all, towards Jeannette, whom I had never desired as a woman, but worshipped as a goddess. It was not love only that she inspired in me, but tender affection and adoration . . . (Colette too inspired these sentiments, with respect and gratitude as well). . . . Such is the true, unvarnished narrative of what is material in my adventure with Marguerite, premeditated but not planned, and executed without depravity. I neither accuse nor justify myself; I relate things as they happened; and that I had no remorse after is proof that I had no bad intention: I was not aware of being untrue either to virtue or Jeannette. Neither did Marguerite feel that she had betrayed her duty or her husband; though it seems that she had doubts later, after her confessor questioned her (most often a dangerous practice; for intentional sin alone is culpable), when she realised at last that she had done wrong. . . . To return.

When my suit was finished I set out again for Courgis. I had not altogether wasted my time, for I had brought books with me and had studied them. On my return I set to work again, my ardour fortified by a glimpse of Jeannette.

Some time later, when the vintage was approaching, I made another journey to Sacy, with the Abbé Thomas and Huet and Melin. My two schoolfellows were filled with such respect for the authors of my being that they could not leave off praising their goodness. And indeed my father and mother had shown these boys, who were living with one of their sons in the house of the eldest, that country hospitality which is without example in towns, where there is always somewhat more constraint. They said on their return: "We have never met anyone like your father and mother. Ah, if only Fayel and Poquet were here!" The mention of my two dear friends made me shed bitter tears! But the thought of Jeannette soothed me.

Huet was the eldest of the three boarders. He was intelligent and wanted to learn, and was very discontented because he was not taught Latin. The Curé of Courgis, without knowing anything of J.-J. Rousseau (who had no literary existence at that time), had the same ideas as that inconsequent writer on the study of Latin and Greek. When Huet complained to him, the Jansenist answered: "A knowledge of Latin is not necessary to salvation, my child." "But you learned it, Monsieur le Curé." "And it might have harmed me save for the grace of God." "God would do the same for me." "You must not tempt Him. Moreover, this knowledge was necessary for me in my profession. My dear boy, since I have had the honour to be a minister of our holy religion, I have forced myself to forget all that I knew of profane literature, by filling my mind with the study of the Holy Fathers, and I have at last succeeded in doing so."* "But Monsieur Nicolas learns it?" "I have condoned this in deference to the wishes of my carnal parents" (the Curé never said simply *my parents* when speaking of his family, but always *my carnal parents*; because his *spiritual parents*, the bishop, the director of the seminary, his confessor and his colleagues were much more really parents to him! It would seem that piety is sometimes opposed to nature). "Moreover I am very much afraid for Nicolas's soul!" "I do so want to learn!" "That is a temptation of the Devil." "But what harm can it do you?" "My conscience is concerned." "That is an astonishing thing to say to me!" "You are arguing; be silent." Then softening: "Some day you will thank me for my refusal." Thus poor Huet was forced to waste his precious youth, because piety had put the same absurdity into the Curé's head (who put it into Madame Brochan's) which a kind of philosophy put later into the head of the eloquent splenetic of Geneva. At first sight religion and philosophy seem to argue differently, but on inspection their reasons are the same: *Useless, waste of time, dangerous knowledge*, etc.

*The Curé of Courgis, in common with other intelligent men, had doubts, and the way in which he dissipated them was to annihilate the power of thought, and put the Bible in the place of reason, physical science and experience. "Therein is all that I need to know," he said. "I am a minister of the Church; my business is to believe and to make others believe; I would not even be honest if I did not believe." There is something sublime in this way of thinking.

Melin, the youngest of us, was a rogue whose only taste at this time was for idleness, and who later developed every vice. Yet he was the favourite! Huet argued; I indulged a fervid and frivolous imagination. To get some idea of my brothers' attitude to me, their conduct towards my school-fellows and myself must be examined. But first it must be observed that the good Chaplain always exhorted me to work and was amazed at my progress, and sometimes gave me high praise; thereby displeasing my brothers, who would have preferred me to be discouraged. Their object was to make me learn a trade (why did they not let me stay farmer?); and it is remarkable that they had the same ideas about carpentry as J.-J. Rousseau, even before he had stated them, a strange concurrence, which has struck me since, and given me an unconquerable aversion from *Émile.* I tried to disguise this from myself in writing the *École des Pères*; but I have always regarded the book as a dangerous work, containing many good things, yet fundamentally vitiated by the author's character, his taste for paradox, and the uncouth virtue which is the result of an ardent and sometimes disordered imagination.* Presbyterians and Jansenists alike teach a harsh, cruel doctrine. Why, oh why did the Jesuits contend against them in the manner of fools bereft of reason, of miserable superstitious charlatans? Is reason for ever estranged from faction? A thousand times I have been on the point of throwing myself into the arms of the Jesuits, and always sound sense and reason have restrained me.

*I had not at the time of writing seen the *Confessions*, that sublime book which to me made J.-J. Rousseau greater than any of his other works. His enemies have said: "The *Confessions* have exposed him. If he is telling the truth he is a monster, who would justify the worst atrocities; amongst others that of having abandoned his children, an abominable action because contrary to nature; and execrable in its pretended justification. After such infamy he should have been content to say: *I could not feed them*, and then at least we should only have felt a contempt for his incapacity." Pure sophistry! A confession of truth is sublime.

I must return to my two comrades, so as not to speak only of myself. . . . Huet and Melin were jealous of me, the former from stupidity and the latter by imitation. The barbarous butchers of these poor childrens' minds and souls overwhelmed me with ridicule and unkindness, no doubt to comfort and reconcile them.* My least mistake was blamed and made fun of; my memory was overburdened. My schoolfellows had three-quarters of an hour in the morning to learn a dozen verses from the New Testament and two lessons from the Diocesan Catechism: I had to do this too, and besides and in the same time, my lesson on Particles and two chapters from Fleury's *Catéchisme historique*; together with a fable from Phædrus, or one of Virgil's Eclogues, or a chapter either from the *Selectæ e Veteri* or *e Profanis,* or (later) one of St. Jerome's letters in Latin, or a chapter from St. Augustine's *de Civitate Dei.* (These latter lessons were given to me when they were becoming afraid of my taste for profane authors. What folly piety induces! My eldest brother, an intelligent man, could entertain it because of the puerile fear that reading the Classics would turn me Pagan! This is to want commonsense: a thoughtful man will never become a polytheist.) I learned all my lessons in three-quarters of an hour, endowed with a courage beyond my natural strength by my parents' exhortations and consciousness of my poverty; and above all pricked on by the image of Jeannette. Not only did I want to avoid correction from an inexorable master who seemed to love the whip, but I desired knowledge. Jeannette was a divinity reigning in my heart; I hoped to win her some day, and I could not even have wished to offer her a husband who, through incapacity, was unworthy of her.

*Then why have you depicted your brothers so otherwise in your *Vie de Mon Père*? I was not lying: I described them as they appeared to certain people, and especially to their parishioners; here I describe what they were to me, to Melin and to Huet. I never lie, although at times I seem to contradict myself.

However, as we shall see shortly, other women besides the tender Rousseau moved me to desire (or rather, Jeannette did not so move me: present, the sight of her fulfilled my soul; absent, I only longed for the sight of her). My most impetuous desires were excited by one who was continually before my eyes, the housekeeper; and she was the first to make me acquainted with remorse! Yes, I endured for her this mental torment which visits us when we stray into actions wounding to the delicacy of an ardent and intense passion. But the senses carry us away. My last adventure at Sacy had brought my organs into play, and given direction to my tendencies; I suffered, I burned, I was shaken by violent tempests. . . . (Is it surprising that the lads who live in towns go astray so young, considering the opportunities which continually present themselves?)

While I was in this state of effervescence, the Abbé Thomas chanced to leave open the box in which he shut away certain books, such as my Latin-French *Phædrus* (for the reason we have seen), *Tibullus, Terence, Catullus, Martial, Ovid, Juvenal,* and others: I put in my hand, and took out . . . *Terence.* I hid during recreation in order to read this author. I was ravished! Ah, how different was the first comedian of ancient Rome from the *Vérité rendue sensible* and the *Anecdotes de la Constitution Unigenitus*! I read, I devoured three acts of the first play, the *Andria*, and found therein my heart's own sentiments for Jeannette. I admired its naturalness – I who had read nothing, save the Bible, but senseless bombast and *idealities*: it was the fine sincerity which struck and gripped me. Molière had long been played in Paris, but nothing was known about him at Sacy. Terence brought about a happy revolution in my ideas, and developed my taste. I had this advantage over young Parisians who have read, or seen on the Boulevards, a thousand trifles before becoming acquainted with the Classics: I had read some such slight stuff myself, but written by Jansenists and therefore well reasoned, with nothing of paradox and every point demonstrated with the rigour of mathematical truth. Thus, unlike that of our little wits and quibblers of the *Sorbonne* or *Saint-Sulpice*, my judgment had not been warped; the beauties of the purest of the Latins fell on virgin soil. But it was not only the admirable diction that enchanted me, it was the matter: I adored Terence while reading him and, during my enforced abstention, withdrawn deep into myself, I marvelled at the excellence of his genius, and asked myself how human wit could reach to such a point.

Next day I secretly stole my divine Terence again, and went on reading. My admiration grew with the interest of the drama; a noble enthusiasm fired me: "I would achieve as much!" I exclaimed. "To work! Ah, if I had written such a play, I would never again be bashful or uncouth! I would go to Jeannette's father and mother, and I would say to them: 'See, this is what I have done; I ask for your daughter's hand. I love her as Pamphylus loved Glycera; she will be happy with me, for I will adore her and be a credit to you.'" These lofty aspirations held me in an enthusiasm which suspended the functions of my two senses, sight and hearing; Abbé Thomas came upon me from behind, saw what I was reading and, recognising his Terence, which he had not given to me, snatched it out of my hands: "Ah-ha, so you know how to get hold of the books I keep locked up!" He took it away; and, immovable with grief, I saw myself deprived of an adored author, the model upon whom I had reckoned to form myself. It had been taken away when the interest was at its height, when the poet had brought all my passions into play. Ah, what stupidity! How little the Abbé Thomas understood the human heart! He had only to let me finish the *Andria* to extinguish the half of my desire; or perhaps to let me read the five other comedies, which were much less interesting. . . . In just the same way, I saw an unwise mother, who had left the *Liaisons dangereuses* about, find her daughter reading it, and snatch the abominable novel away from her in the middle of the third volume. The girl, who was about fifteen (dare I tell it!), wanted the book so intensely, that she granted the last of favours to a man of forty-five, on condition that he procured it for her. Then she finished it. Her longing satisfied, she was astonished, terrified, by her sin; she was in despair, and came near to taking her own life. O mothers, be prudent!

With bitter grief I watched while Bigotry locked away my cherished author in the fatal box, and from that moment, I dreamt of him night and day. I did not know how the play ended; thinking it admirable and marvellous I racked my brains to conceive an ending, and despaired of ever succeeding. I wove the story of Jeannette into that of Glycera, and the passion of Pamphylus legalised my own; it increased my love for Jeannette and my zeal for work.

It was during this time that, with my brain on fire, I tried to write a Comedy: but I had no complete model, and could produce nothing but a monstrosity. I wrote it in Latin; and in prose as I knew nothing of the art of verse. This whim of mine was not unuseful; I wrote fervently, and, helped by my excellent memory, made use of certain phrases from the Latin poet. For I forgot to say that I could have read the whole Comedy at a single sitting, if I had not compared each sentence in the translation with the Latin. . . . And here some one will check me: "You wrote in Latin, when you were still only at the rudiments?" Think not, you who thus interrupt me, that I studied as do your children in your colleges, and as you did who had parents without hearts, and perhaps without virtue;

you, who did not love Jeannette, nor learning for her sake; who discharged your duty as though it were a burden, who had not read three and a half acts of the *Andria*. *I* had half read a masterpiece of human wit, a comedy which brought into play the all-powerful passion of love and every other passion, without ever reaching the climax which would have calmed them. *I* had a good mother, who eagerly rejoiced in my slightest progress, and ardently desired to see me win distinction. *I* had a father, who never mentioned his own father save with veneration, and never tired of telling of his pleasure in giving him satisfaction. *I* loved, I adored Jeannette, and I had never spoken to her! She was always present, urging me forward, and saying: *"I am beautiful and gentle, and compounded of excellent qualities; I am an enchanting nymph! Judge, then, what worth is necessary before you may dare to hope for me."* I studied, I learned as much in a month as you would in a year; knowledge was not driven into me as into you: I longed for it with an inconceivable hunger. . . . That is why at the end of a year I spoke and wrote Latin with an ease that made the worthy Chaplain weep for joy and admiration, though it did not please my brothers, who trembled (so they said) for my salvation, and surmised an inclination in me to write romances. . . .

And how was my passion nourished, when I never spoke to Jeannette? By thinking of her continually and praying God fervently to grant her to me! Every day in church I repeated my prayer: *Unam petii a Domino.* Also I got satisfaction in a way which perhaps no one else ever devised: our neighbour the bell-ringer was a vine tender and, as his duties interfered with his work, he asked the Abbé Thomas to let one of us ring at noon. Children love bells, but as I was busy at my work, Huet and Melin had this treat to satiety, until, wearying of it, they complained that I never rang the bell. They were told that, as I nearly always went to Saint-Cyr, it was only fair for them to ring instead of me; nevertheless I was sent to do it. I showed my ill-humour by a slight grimace and the Abbé Thomas, quick to see because he was always watching me, said severely: "You will ring the noon bell every day." He wanted to subdue the flesh and nature, which have always been rebellious since the Fall. Apparently he was less interested in the salvation of my comrades. . . . On the second day I realised that, alone in the church, my freedom gave me opportunities which should be used. "That is Jeannette's place!" I ran to it; I knelt, trembling and with a beating heart. I leant where she had leaned; I passed my fingers over the place where she sat; it was no bench that I touched. . . . I left content and full of joy and zeal. The next day I waited for midday impatiently: the order was given; I got up; I ran. Eagerly I knelt in Jeannette's place; but a livelier sentiment informed my heart, and I stooped and kissed the stone which her delicate feet had trod. God! What rapture for a Jansenist of about fifteen, formed, reserved and reflective, whose passions, repressed by devotees, burned with an energy that you will never know, poor abortions, Parisians surfeited before you have entered into your inheritance, exhausted before you have possessed your senses! More fervently than ever I recited my prayer. *Unam petii.* . . . (Alas, it was in vain.) . . . So I loved my duty of ringing the noon bell, but I disguised this; even concealing my reasons from myself, and saying that I ought gladly to render this little service to poor Pinon the bell-ringer. . . . Was I happy, good Reader? I who had a sweet Angelus to ring each day? I who each Sunday passed a delicious morning thinking without constraint of my beloved and watching the rising sun? I, whose eyes never left Jeannette Rousseau throughout the long sermon, and yet were never sated? Ah, I was the happiest of men. I was so happy that my happiness was complete; for I never sought to see my mistress closer, or to speak to her I worshipped.

One summer day, after a long drought, there was no water in our big well for the garden: so the Abbé Thomas, who was in charge of the curial gardens, sent Huet and myself to fetch water. The nearest well* was just by the entrance to the courtyard of Monsieur Rousseau, the schoolmaster, notary, and Jeannette's father. There was no rope, and Monsieur Stallin, Jeannette's uncle, on whose rope we were counting, was away. Some one told me to ask Monsieur Rousseau. I returned to Huet, not daring to tell him where a rope could be found, because I should have had to utter Mlle Rousseau's name, and I could not have done so without stammering, trembling and blushing; without suffering, in a word, torture by fire. However he volunteered that he had seen Mademoiselle Rousseau and was going to ask her for a rope. . . . Shuddering, I caught him by the coat. (Be easy, Reader, it was not jealousy; but a quite other sentiment! "He dares to speak to her! To my Divinity! To a girl whose mere image makes me tremble, and that not with the enterprise of love!") However, Jeannette, who had noticed our difficulty, fetched the rope and brought it to the well, and showed us how to fix it. . . . Incapable of movement, I stood with lowered eyes, half hidden by the well, while Huet arranged the rope; I saw his hands touch Jeannette's as she helped him, but without envy of his fortune; for those delicate hands would have burned mine like a red-hot iron. My breath came with difficulty; I could not have spoken if I had wanted to. . . . And yet my ears were ravished and enchanted by the melodious sound of the few words she uttered, and by my glimpses of her slender waist. No, no one has ever been like her. The villagers were just peasants, and fashionable townswomen just coquettes; Jeannette alone was a girl in all the richness of that enchanting word, which Parisians have since profaned by using it to mean a *drab*. Yet by this very sacrilege, they have contributed something to the better understanding of my conception of this pretty word.

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*The house still stands and is described as small but attractive. It is approached through a little yard containing flower-beds, and in the angle of the yard-walls on the right is seen the well. A locksmith now occupies the house. [Ed.]

I was not calmed or capable of helping my comrade to draw water, until she who troubled me had withdrawn. . . . Did she divine my feelings and my perturbation? I think so. She was seventeen; also she did not address me, and why should she not have spoken to me as she did to Huet, if it were not that she feared to add to my embarrassment? And I noticed, from this day, that she no longer glanced freely in my direction as formerly; she kept her eyes lowered during the sermon.

There were, in the parish, two pious spinsters in easy circumstances who were called *the Sisters*, because they took the girls' school voluntarily and visited the poor sick. One of them, who was a distant relative of ours, Sister Droin, told Marguerite Pâris that my eyes were always turned towards Mademoiselle Rousseau throughout the address or sermon. Marguerite repeated this to me with all kindness, adding that several other people had made the same remark. I blushed and then turned pale; at that moment my greatest fear was not that my brothers or any member of my family should be told, but that Jeannette should know that I had dared to lift my eyes to her. Marguerite, who had been a beautiful brunette and, although sincerely pious, had still a little something of the coquette in her, smiled slyly and, as she was acquainted with passion, only said these words: "You are very young!" Her indulgent understanding of my hidden feelings made her dear to me;

she had already roused desire, and I know not what tender sentiment was now joined to this.

Some weeks later I became acquainted with jealousy. Jeannette was a god-mother, and her fellow god-parent was young Droin, son of the lord's attorney. On hearing of this from Marguerite, I felt my heart contract. However I watched the christening, but from a distance. I observed everything, and said to myself what I have so often read since in novels:

"Does he realise as I do the value of her whom he approaches? Could he feel as I should the happiness of being her husband? Ah, Jeannette, adorable Jeannette, will you be loved as you deserve to be loved, and as I should love you?" Tears as bitter as any I have ever shed overflowed my eyes! Jealousy increased my love. I seemed to read in his behaviour that Droin was one of those wooden creatures of whom there are so many. The way in which he looked at Jeannette and spoke to her was vulgar: not thus would I have looked and spoken! Ah, with what ravishment! . . . I heard later from Marguerite Pâris that Jeannette was not a rich enough wife for him, and this comforted me. I adored the beautiful Rousseau, and I desired her poor; I cherished the idea that some day she would owe everything to my love and my abilities; and, in spite of the watch I kept upon myself, joy was so visibly depicted on my face that Marguerite observed it. But, prudent as she was modest, she made no comment.

I was now completely formed; the infrequent exercise of my manhood had yet been sufficient to give me the habit and to inflame my senses. Often I was a whole week without a sight of my idol to inspire me with a love of virtue; I would revivify her image by ringing the noon bell; but, on my return, I always saw Marguerite: a spinster of forty, it is true, but fresh as a nun, or rather as a woman who, having independent means, has never known want. Moreover, it is well known that this age in women is no bar to the desires of boys on the threshold of manhood; it even seems that nature turns their inclination towards maturity; not for tender love, but for enjoyment. Marguerite Pâris was well-made, clean in herself and in everything about her; she dressed her hair with taste, and in just the same fashion as Mlle Rousseau; her shoes came from Paris and were elegant as any beauty's. If she wore sabots, they were well-made and had high heels. On the day of the Assumption, she had on new black morocco mules stitched with dazzling white, and with the narrow heel which adds slenderness to a well-turned leg. And this leg was covered by a fine cotton stocking with blue clocks. In spite of myself, my eyes were riveted on Marguerite's pretty foot; I could not turn them away. . . . It was very hot; and, after Vespers, the housekeeper changed her dress and put on white; the shorter skirt revealed her stockinged leg. My state was similar to that induced by Nannette four years previously at Mme Rameau's; indeed, it was more definite, for I had passed the age when the voice changes to a man's, and a razor becomes a necessity. Marguerite noticed my attentive glances, and, good woman, seemed flattered. She knew that a fond attachment occupied my heart, and thought it a misfortune; fearing that I might suffer as much through loving the daughter, as she had herself by loving the father. Some distraction seemed a good thing, and she was not displeased to contribute to it. We were alone: my companions were playing, the Abbé Thomas was occupied, and I was reading at my little table near the window. Not far from me, Marguerite was preparing a salad, her legs crossed, displaying one of them to the calf. Her pretty slipper only held to her foot by the point. Imagination kindled, the senses warmed, and it became impossible for me to sit still. . . . Those instinctive movements – directed by Nature herself as a necessary calmant, or brought about by physical exasperation – became irresistible. I rose in a drunken frenzy; I went to Marguerite; she showed no fear: "My dear child," she said gently, "what is the matter? Come, come; what do you want?" I did not answer; but I took hold of her hands and pressed them, without further enterprise. The wildness of my looks disturbed her: "Monsieur Nicolas, do you feel ill? I will fetch you some water." Without answering, I restrained her powerfully, almost stifling her with the pressure of my arms. She feared that resistance would only intensify my efforts; she pressed me to her breast. . . . My strength left me; a cloud covered my eyes; my limbs failed. I would have fallen had not Marguerite supported me. For the first time, the crisis had come about without intercourse and without complete loss of consciousness. In an ecstasy at having been aware throughout, I said to myself: "Anyway I am a man!" And again Jeannette was the chief reason for my joy: "Now I could be Mlle Rousseau's husband." I recovered from my excessive perturbation, and Marguerite, seeing that I was calm again, remonstrated with me, although she did not know (at least, I imagine not) all that had just happened. I protested that it was some involuntary aberration; that I had been beside myself, why I did not know, but was far from wanting to do her any harm. She appeared convinced, for she smiled. Then she asked: "But what put you in such a state?" "It must have been the sight of your slipper and your leg," I answered, such was still my innocence, "for, when I was taken so, I could not help looking at them; I was like a bird charmed by a snake: it feels the danger but cannot escape it." "But if you love Jeannette Rousseau. . . ." These words were as a thunderbolt. A kind of chill gripped me; I turned to ice. It had just rung for Evensong. I went to church, and there withdrawn upon myself, I blushed for my action, involuntary though it had been. It had, in fact, a singular effect upon my imagination and my organs. To prevent a return of the too ardent emotion caused by Marguerite's voluptuous foot and leg, I was obliged to have recourse to my antipathy for blood, visualising a maddened soldier passing his sword through the body of Mme Chevrier or some other pretty townswoman. (Just as a physical antidote is itself a poison; so I had recourse to thoughts of death to counter a superabundance of life. Mind and body are tracings of each other.) But during the exhortation delivered by the Curé from the pulpit, I had a more efficacious remedy. The sight of Jeannette, the beautiful and modest Rousseau, calmed the senses she had never troubled; her power influenced my most noble part, inspiring every virtue, even chastity! I am not deceiving you, citizen reader: if I meant to lie or even to suppress the truth, you would not have read the last few pages.

My experience on the day of the Assumption marked an epoch in my life. After this crisis, the first of which I had been fully conscious, I continued to love Jeannette in all purity, and with no thought of favours: my love was independent of any pleasure save that of loving. But after a week of virtue, other women began to stir me; and, as Marguerite was always before my eyes, with the lure of a pretty foot to which I had always answered from childhood, it was the longing for her favours which devoured me.

This good woman, who understood my heart better than I did myself, was neither licentious nor a hypocrite; hers was an upright, pure and excellent spirit, and she behaved to me as a mother. She had a tender heart, for she had loved. Also she had been loved without herself loving; for I knew that, in her spring time, she had inspired so strong a passion in a young man that he had died of love, and of grief because he could not triumph over his rival, Jeannette's father. She was acquainted with the new sentiment which troubled me, and used me with tender consideration and kindly tact. The difference in our ages was her protection; her own conduct in the past made her indulgent, for she had often mourned the lover she had never had, and the lover who had died because of her – the one, for love of him; the other in kindness of heart. She would never marry after, and once said to some one who was urging his suit: "There are only two men for me: one I would have accepted, because God had made him pleasant to me and I could not prevent myself from loving him; and the other, failing him, I would have taken, because God had made me so pleasant to him that he could not help loving me. They are no longer for me, and neither am I for any man." Clearly I was happily situated for avoiding both the licence and the discouragement caused by excessive strictness, which might have led me to the infamous vice of mast. . . . But we are passing on too quickly to important incidents. Everything is interconnected in my story; cause develops cause through its effects, and those seemingly most trivial have sometimes the most serious consequences.

I have said that I often went into the country on the community's business; and that, on leaving the presbytery, a pleasing fantasy concerning my marriage with Jeannette took possession of my imagination.

One day, when passing in front of the château, next to which was Mlle Rousseau's house, I saw her sitting with her cousin Stallin: they were doing needle work. I caught a glimpse of Jeannette's pretty foot. Ah, how this charm surpassed all that I had yet admired! I blushed and saluted her awkwardly; I did not know where I was, nor what I was doing. I retraced my steps as if I had forgotten something; and went into Marguerite's room, my imagination on fire. The housekeeper was not there; I saw her slippers, and sighed: "How pretty that slipper would be on Jeannette's foot!" I took one and carried it away. When I passed Jeannette's house again, she was no longer there. I was almost glad; the sight of her was too ardent a pleasure, when I was myself seen, and was always joined to suffering; I feared it as the young and timid beauty fears her bridal evening and the young husband whom she loves. . . . A hundred times, on the way, I admired my stolen jewel; and recalled with perturbation the emotions of Assumption day – dangerous thoughts, but for the recent memory of Jeannette's foot. It was the eve of the Virgin of September. On my return in the evening I had no chance to replace Marguerite's slipper. In the morning I went to Saint-Cyr for our provisions. When I got home I went to fetch some lunch, and found Marguerite anxiously looking for her missing mule. . . . I trembled lest she should discover my strange fantasy; and, drawing it deftly from my pocket, dropped it in a box as I passed by. When I was at the door, Marguerite looked at me as though she would have liked to question me; then she turned and saw the slipper. She was not duped, but she did not understand my reason for taking it. She adorned herself with it – for it was a real adornment.

After Vespers we found ourselves alone; but she avoided that which had excited me on the day of the Assumption. . . . I had come in to eat something. . . . "Confess one thing to me," she said, "you hid my slipper?" I blushed, but I did not lie; I told the truth. "Poor child," she said. "I forgive you! For I see by this that you are able to do as much for Jeannette as Louis Denèvres (the lover her indifference had driven to despair) did for . . . another. . . . You must pray God to deliver you from these thoughts; and be certain that I too will pray for you, Monsieur

Nicolas. But your brothers must suspect nothing: all would be lost! They do not love you, because you are by a different mother; and they seek out occasion to send you away; or in some way to interrupt your education. Therefore keep a watch on yourself! Poor boy, what a heart you have, and how you will suffer! . . . Jeannette is dear to me beyond expression, but she comes of a proud family and one ill-disposed towards Monsieur le Curé, because of the lord's attorney, Droin, who does not like him. If, instead, you had entertained the same feelings towards my cousin and god-daughter, Marianne Taboué, who is almost as pretty as Mlle Rousseau, and better suited to your age since, tall as she is, she is not yet fifteen, I would have gentled your affair along until you were both of age. I would have spoken to your parents and, by assuring her the possession of my property, which yields a nice enough little income, I might perhaps have succeeded. . . . But there is nothing to be done with the Rousseaus; they have a pride . . . which I cannot condemn; and then, how could I endow the daughter of a man who . . . there would be talk." I was still a child; Marianne had sometimes stirred my impetuous senses. I had the inclination for marriage common in early adolescence; finally material considerations were not indifferent to me any more than to other peasants, and although violently in love, I had not yet felt the full force of my attachment for Jeannette. (Readers, accustomed to the balanced probabilities of romance, this will perplex you; but I warn you that you must get used to it.) "O Sister Marguerite," I exclaimed, "how good you are! Yes, I will love your god-daughter. I assure you she is very pretty and very amiable! . . . Do you not think that she is very like Mlle Rousseau?" "Of course she is. Could she be really amiable if she were not?" "Yes, yes, dear Marguerite! I have already told myself a hundred times that if I had not seen Jeannette I would have loved Marianne!" Marguerite smiled: "And I am quite sure that if she is ever your wife, you will tell her one day: 'Oh, how I should have loved you if I had never seen Jeannette!'" I really thought that I should be happy with Marianne, and the reason for my mistake was, that never having spoken to Jeannette – not daring to, not even able to – my love had not the assurance which is given by free intercourse between two mutually attracted hearts. Also this passion gave me pain, and made no appeal to my senses. I wanted to love Jeannette, to make her happy, to be her devoted servant when she was my wife, rather than to be loved by her; but even in this event my imagination pictured no more than a kiss. This was no innocence on my part; my fancies had been licentious enough on more than one occasion. I loved Jeannette; not as I had loved Julie Barbier, not as a sister, not even as a friend, but . . . what word can I use to make myself understood? For neither did I love her as a goddess, even though I have used this term; I loved her through a lively and powerful inclination, of necessity, by a secret presentiment that I should have perfect happiness with her because she was the complement of my own life. Ten years later I should have had to win her or die: but at my then age, faculties, heart, intelligence – personality in fact – were not sufficiently formed to feel the strength of my attachment. Is it astonishing that I seized greedily on the first chance of sacrificing an attachment, which gave nothing to my senses and let the passions sleep, for another wherein I perceived enjoyments suitable to my awakening powers? . . . Marguerite made no promise. She did not consider my character sufficiently formed.

One day at Evensong, I forced myself to be unfaithful to Mlle Rousseau: my eyes wandered to Marianne, and fancy constructed an imaginary marriage with her. The housekeeper was observing me. Mlle Taboué was tall and had the pliant slenderness of sixteen; she was very fair, and as modest as Mlle Rousseau. She woke desires and filled me with licentious thoughts; I felt that, when she was my wife, I should not love her purely, but solely for the pleasures of enjoyment. Then my gratitude to Marguerite led me to associate the unchaste thought of possessing her, with that of possessing Marianne. . . . Thus all other loves led me astray; the fair Rousseau was the only one who inspired a chaste love. . . . But before continuing, the reader must be further enlightened with regard to Marguerite.

What was her attitude towards me? She loved me, but with a tender and maternal love. She could not have doubted but that she had inspired very lively desires in me, and was both touched and grateful: a spinster, however virtuous she may be, cannot be insensible to a young man's ardent homage to what remains of her attractions. It recalled to her heart the double memory of M. Rousseau whom she had tenderly loved, and of Louis Denèvres who had adored her, and whom she had too late regretted. Thus out of gratitude and a lively memory of what she herself had suffered, this sensible woman wanted to protect me against the torment of an unhappy love. But she watched me: she hoped to read my heart more by my eyes than by my words, and she meant to act when she was certain. One more word must be added: she confessed to the Chaplain, my good friend and I would almost venture to say my admirer; they must surely have spoken about me, and the opinions of the one would have fortified those of the other.

After my conversation with Marguerite and the desires which Marianne had excited during Evensong, I thought that I had conquered my affection for Mlle Rousseau. Hope and practicability inclined me to the former;

the pride of the latter's parents increased my already excessive timidity, whereas Marianne's were kindly people. My little plan was shaping perfectly in my mind, when my eyes chanced to turn towards the fair Rousseau. God, how beautiful she looked! It was as though love in anger had surrounded her with all the graces. . . . My heart turned completely round: "Ah, forgive me, forgive me, sole object of my devotion!" I said in a whisper. "I feel that I can adore no one but you." And from that moment my eyes refused to leave Jeannette, or be turned again to Marianne. Marguerite saw through me easily; she spoke to me sometimes of her goddaughter, but she was very careful never to speak of me to her.

I continued for some time in this seeming state of flux; gnawed by desire for all the pretty women in the town, such as those I have already named. Sometimes my heated imagination constructed a seraglio, composed of Marianne, of young Bourdillat, daughter of a churchwarden, and of her still pretty mother, whom I used to see collecting; of Mme Chevrier, Mme Droin, the second wife of the lord's attorney, and Mlle Droin her step-daughter, who was first the mistress and then the wife of young Rousseau, Jeannette's brother; of certain girls from the confirmation class, such as young Nollin, Jeannin, Adine, Cady, Pinon, etc. – to the number of a dozen (for my appetite demanded no less). My imagination strayed in a licentious labyrinth, thinking about these odalisks. Even more did my brother's penitent, Mlle de Courtives of Chablis, excite my salacity; her fresh bloom, her dress, her white skin, and a rape* that had befallen her, sometimes threw me into a wanton frenzy. But my heart was never in the least concerned; and I should think it useless to mention these shameful thoughts, were it not necessary to expose the springs of my emotional life,

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and bring these fantasies into line with my passion for Jeannette Rousseau – a passion so different, that if this coexistence had not happened in my own heart, I could not have believed it in another. . . . But there was one who excited my desires more strongly than any in my imaginary seraglio, by reason of her autumnal beauty; her taste, her cleanliness and her pretty shoes; her affectionate manner and her good will towards myself; the frequent occasions for seeing her alone and for discussing my sentiments, for talking about Jeannette and Marianne: obviously it is to Marguerite that I refer. One evening, when she was on her way from Auxerre, where she had gone to make some purchases for the house, I was sent to meet her, that I might lead her mount, the curial ass, a very stubborn, very strong, and fine specimen of his kind. I hurried towards my dear confidant with all the eagerness of a son who flies to meet a darling mother. I found her in the valley of Montaléry, and was a great help to her, during the ascent of the cone-shaped hill which leads to the rising ground of Courgis. When we got to the top, I begged Marguerite to remount Martin; she was obliged to lean upon me. A little shiver of pleasure ran over me. She settled herself, and I arranged her skirts over her legs; I touched her foot; my heart beat quickly. . . . Sister Marguerite noticed my emotion, and smiled at it. She talked about Jeannette, assuring me that I loved Mlle Rousseau only; and I responded by taking her most thoroughly into my confidence! I laid bare my soul: the quality of my affection for the beautiful Rousseau, and my inclination for Marianne; I even went so far as to describe how other women moved me. She seemed a little taken aback at the extent of my confidences! Finally I spoke about herself, and in glowing phrases! We were descending the pass; the steepness of the hill forced me to hold on to the basket in which Marguerite's feet were not resting; from time to time, I put my hand about her waist to steady her against Martin's stumbles. She was as red as a rose from what I could see of her in profile. There was no time to answer me, as the Abbé Thomas, who had come out to inspect the curial field, joined us unexpectedly. . . . After supper, everyone went out to take the air in the garden, while Marguerite went into the Curé's room to give an account of certain private commissions; I seized that moment. . . . There are aberrations which cannot be described; but if I give no glimpse of them, certain events will appear unlikely, or the consequence of madness; the Reader may judge from what follows if I should thus have prepared the way. It was to the pretty shoe which had just enchanted me on Marguerite's foot that I betook myself. . . .

While my desires for this dear woman were in most active fermentation, she paid another visit to the town. My brothers decided that, after the difficulty she had had with Martin on her last journey, one of us should accompany her. She did not want Melin; they did not care to give her Huet, who had certain major indiscretions with his young and pretty schoolfellow to his count, so I was chosen. Her way of dressing for the journey demonstrated how wonderfully women in middle life, who have once been pretty, understand how to make the most of themselves, and to shake off ten or fifteen of their years. Marguerite did not look thirty, with a kerchief of fine muslin upon her head, her waist controlled by the pliant whale-bone of her bodice, a close-fitting cotton jacket whiter than alabaster, a red squared apron, a skirt of shot silk, and black morocco shoes, with high slender heels and buckles set with brilliants. A smile took from her pleasant face the lines left by unhappy love, and made it young again; yet this did not rob it of an interesting languor; her large eyes were soft and brilliant. . . . And I was at an age when nothing of this sort escapes one. . . .

A chair which I brought to the door enabled her to mount in comfort; and I walked at her side, to prevent the basket in which her feet rested from shifting. For the hill down into Montaléry valley, she was obliged to dismount; I received her in my arms; and my arm about her waist supported her during the descent; I almost carried her. In the valley itself, it was a pleasure to watch her walking on the greensward, with that free voluptuous grace to which high heels contribute so much in perfectly made women. She remounted, helped by the embankment of an old pond. I arranged her as I had at first: my hot hands strayed over her feet, over the bottom of her skirt; then timidly withdrew, to return again and again. We chatted: the road was easy for the rest of the way. . . . Marguerite, to create a diversion, talked about Marianne. I repeated what I had already said to her some time before, and confirmed it by my subsequent examination of my heart. The Sister mentioned Jeannette's name first, that is to say, before I had uttered it. I blushed and lowered my eyes, and withdrew my hand from the basket. "Ah, how you love her!" said Marguerite, smiling. "Yes, I adore her! That is the word. O dear sister Marguerite, one day I beg of you to . . ." "To? . . . But I understand, and one day I will tell you something. . . . To tell you the truth, I love little Rousseau as much as I love my godchild, and . . . even more perhaps; I will not conceal it from you: as you are sincere with me, I shall be so with you. I cannot help tenderly loving the daughter of a man who was so dear to me and never consciously did me wrong. Thus, as far as I am concerned, I approve your choice. Yes, you love as one should love, and as it is rare to love. And a man is happy with a woman whom he loves thus. But conceal your feelings from everyone, even from your sweetheart: if it is necessary to tell her, I will tell her at the right time and place." I seized Marguerite's hand, pressing my lips to it a dozen times, and relinquished it, drenched with my kisses and my tears! Sister Marguerite, too, was moved, and wanting to distract my thoughts, reminded me that we had the Canonical Hour of Prime to say. We collected ourselves, and as the man, I led; the Sister said the alternate verses, and I the capitule and the prayer, and everything that usually falls to the celebrant. When we had finished, we resumed our conversation; and Marguerite turned it upon my family: upon my father and my parents' plans for me, and the property which each child might hope to inherit. I answered according to my knowledge: "We are not rich; there are too many of us. That is why I feel that I must work hard and not waste my time, so that I can make a future for myself." Marguerite raised her eyes to heaven, turning her face a little from me, and said in a low voice: "What a crime! I see that all men are men; and devotees more so than others. Ah," she added aloud, "I am getting to know the world very late! . . . I approve of your sentiments, Monsieur Nicolas; they are excellent, but guard against any indiscretion! For if you are not prudent, your education will end. It is useless to say more, and, in any other case, I should have said too much." These conversations, and the two Canonical Hours, Terce and Sext, brought us innocently to the town.

Marguerite began by despatching the business that concerned M. le Curé; then she turned to her private purchases. For these we went to a Jansenist mercer to whom the housekeeper gave her custom. Mme Jeudy, the owner, kept us to dinner; and the strain thus put upon my natural shyness was the more cruel since she had a charming daughter,* just married to a young Jansenist of Clamecy, and a grown-up niece with a good figure. The young couple lived in the house and under the eye of their pious

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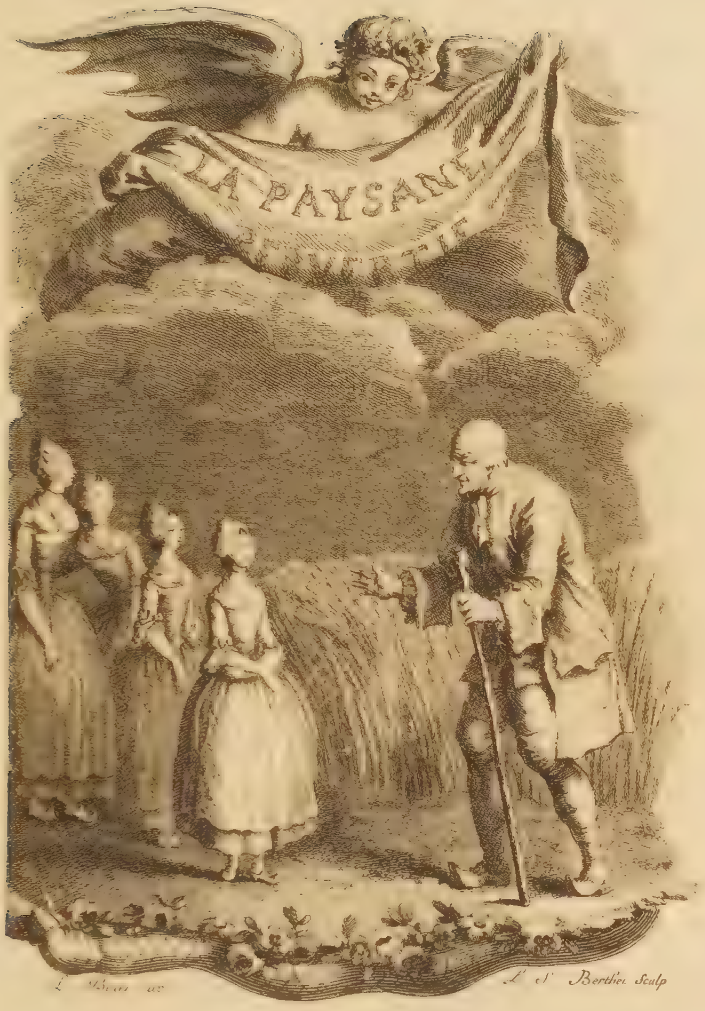
*The heroine of the LXXIII Contemporaine, Volume xiii, entitled *Le Mariage Enfantin.*

mother, and could neither speak to each other in the daytime, nor sleep together at night without her permission. I was placed between the young and beautiful Sophie Jeudy and her cousin; Marguerite was on the other side of Sophie, then Mme Jeudy, then the poor husband. A pretty young cook, called Marianne Cuisin, waited at table. The more I admired Sophie's beauty, the more abashed I became; I was never shy with strangers whom I did not care about, but the sight of these delicate charms made my heart throb so that I could scarcely eat. Although Sophie was married, she was still called Mlle Jeudy (it must be admitted that it is only the *honest people*, as the Jansenists are called among themselves, who do such things!) or simply Sophie; I thought it a charming name. My imagination was working, working. I was consumed by a smouldering fire, fanned by her tender seduction; at the same time pleased and vexed to be dining in this house. "How pretty she is!" I thought; but only desire was stirred. . . . At last dinner and my embarrassment were alike over, and with them the pleasure of covertly regarding the provocative Sophie. But on leaving the table, I noticed a girl in a doorway beside the clock tower, who was even more beautiful than Sophie, for she had a likeness to Jeannette and inspired the same emotions. She was young and tall and slender as a reed; her face was pale, but there was a sweetness, an inexpressible charm, about its contours. I was enchanted by her vivacity and her delightful laugh, and by that town-bred air, which is as seductive to country folk as Court manners are to citizens, or village simplicity sometimes to the courtier. "Oh, how pretty the girls are here!" I thought. "But . . . Jeannette is an angel! . . ." This lovely reed-like girl put Sophie out of my head; but the exacerbation of the senses remained. As for Sophie's rival, she was later to play an interesting part in my life.

We left Auxerre about four o'clock so as to reach Courgis before seven, that is at nightfall. I had eaten very little. We had brought a small viaticum, which had been saved by our lunch with Mme Jeudy. When we had left the new road just beyond Saint-Gervais, we said Nones and Vespers, and then chatted. By that time we had reached Labrosse, in the parish of Quenne. Marguerite talked about Mme Jeudy, her daughter Sophie and her grown-up niece. She told me that the latter, who was twenty-six, was authorised to treat her young cousin and the husband very strictly; and had been appointed their superviser. The good housekeeper, speaking of the kind of constraint imposed on the young couple, deprecated the mother's conduct, and frankly said that she was very much surprised that M. le Curé (my brother and Mme Jeudy's confessor) did not order her to behave otherwise. "But they all have such strange ideas!" she added. "To hear them talk one would think that marriage was a sin; and yet it is a sacrament. . . . Mlle Jeudy's marriage was arranged by her father, against the wishes of her mother who wanted her daughter to remain celibate. Unfortunately he fell ill the day after it was celebrated and never got up again. The mother at once stopped any intimate communication between the bride and groom, and would have liked to send her son-in-law back to his people, but the agreement had already been made in writing so that she had to adhere to it in spite of herself; but she has been harsh! . . . The poor son-in-law stays on because he loves his wife." "Ah, yes," I said ingenuously, "and with good reason! It would matter very little to me if I was the . . . of J. . . . whether I could talk to her, provided she was my . . ., and that no one could separate us, or give her to another." I said this with great emphasis. Marguerite looked at me sideways: "You think so! . . ." she said. "But let us leave it at that."


LA PAYSANE
PERVERTIE

L. Binet inv. L. S. Berthet Sculp

We had reached the valley of Montaléry, over against the hamlet, and were entering a sombre, lonely place, thick with willows and poplars, watered by the crystal runlet from a little spring. We felt the prick of appetite, and I helped Marguerite to dismount. We sat on the grass, and she spread out the food, while I put our uncorked bottle to cool in the basin of the spring. We had a most agreeable meal! . . . When hunger was appeased, my eyes fixed themselves on Marguerite; and the day's experiences – the image of the provocative Sophie, an appetising kiss I had seen her give to her young husband between two doors, and the most expressive caress on her bare skin with which he had responded, memories of dainty charms and luxurious town attire; again and above all the present incentive – everything united to inflame desire. A devouring fire burnt in my breast. "It seems to me," I said to my companion, "that no one could have a prettier foot?" Marguerite answered smiling: "Come, we must go on!" "Just one more moment!" and I held her by force, for I was becoming very strong. "Well, well; I do not mind. Let us talk." I encircled her waist with my arm; my eyes were sparkling; I dared to kiss her. She was frightened: "Monsieur Nicolas, Monsieur Nicolas! Let us go on!" "No, no!" I exclaimed, in a voice so eager that it increased her alarm. I embraced her again with indescribable vehemence. . . . "What are you doing? What do you want, naughty child?" "I want . . . I want . . ." (I dared to say what it was I wanted.) "No, no, my child! No, Monsieur Nicolas! It is a sin . . ." "No, no!" "Yes, truly, it is a sin. . . . Let us go on!" I crushed her in a stifling embrace. . . . "My dear child," she said, "you are laying up remorse for yourself! One day you are going to marry Jeannette. . . ." She was interrupted by the vigour of my enterprise. She defended herself easily against the attack of an awkward adolescent, whose very passion made him little to be feared. "Let us go on, my son!" she repeated. Then, touched by her tone, I became tender instead of brutal, and embraced her, saying: "Dear Marguerite, I do not know . . . but . . . it will kill me! . . . If you knew! . . . I am in a state in which I would throw myself upon a woman and . . . she would kill me, or I should have to kill her if she tried to resist me. . . . No, it is not a sin; what I feel cannot be overcome. . . ." "My dear child, I have more experience than you; besides my sense of delicacy rejects this thing. . . . Listen, I will tell you my story on the way home. . . . Could you wish (if ever you were on the point of winning Mlle Rousseau's hand and trust) that an obstacle as cruel as unlooked for . . ." At these words, utterly abashed and out of countenance, I abandoned my attack with something of terror, a deep sigh escaping me. Marguerite, freed of me, quickly got upon Martin, and I was obliged to follow. As I rejoined her, she said that she meant to keep her word and tell me her story:

"I am the niece of the late Monsieur Polvé, who was Curé of Courgis before Monsieur Juliot, your brother's predecessor. I was brought up in his house by my mother, a widow living with her brother. At sixteen I lost her. My uncle was a hard man, and, for I must make myself clear, only too fond of the sin to which you are inclined. . . . Take care, Monsieur Nicolas! This passion, if not controlled, will carry you farther than you think, and gain strength in old age. Then it is hideous, horrifying the object of its lust, and bringing shame upon its possessor. It is said that I was passably good looking. My uncle grew jealous of me . . . but, restrained by shame, he did not dare to express his vile desires; or possibly he fought against them with all his strength. I think he did. At that time I used to see Monsieur Rousseau at our house; he was planning to be the schoolmaster and notary and often visited his Curé. I took a liking for him, and my uncle perceived this by my joy whenever the young man entered, and my gaiety during dinner or supper when he was present. He also noticed that M. Rousseau was attracted by me, but dared not show his inclination for fear of displeasing the Curé. My uncle took this as his point of departure. He told Monsieur Rousseau, as if in confidence, that he did not mean to marry me, as he proposed to make me a nun, adding that all his arrangements were made, and he would never forgive anyone who tried to upset them by talking to his niece of marriage. Monsieur Rousseau, who had said nothing to me, strove to turn his thoughts to Mlle Stallin, a deserving girl whom his family had already suggested to him. He avoided being alone with me, for . . . and sought the company of her who has since given him . . . your Jeannette; and a son also, who is a thoroughly good boy, and a second daughter. The withdrawal of M. Rousseau determined the conduct of Louis Denèvres, a young man of good family, for he was related to my uncle's predecessor. He sought occasion to speak to me and obtain my consent to his asking for my hand in marriage. At last he found the opportunity he wanted, but I would not receive his attentions. As I refused him private interviews and, after having opened one mysteriously delivered letter from him, not knowing what it was, would open none of the others, the poor fellow decided to have my uncle approached. M. Polvé received the intermediary very badly, and told him brutally that his niece was not for the mouth of any man in that district. The intermediary withdrew, nettled by his pastor's pride, and went to tell M. Denèvres. In the meantime my uncle came to me in a fury to know whether it was with my consent that the demand had been made. 'No, I assure you, Monsieur,' I answered. 'But if it was on behalf of Monsieur Denèvres, he deserves consideration.'

My uncle flew into a passion. He called me a shameless, precocious wanton, and a hypocrite, and ended by saying that I should not be free to do as I liked until I was twenty-five. 'I ask nothing better, Monsieur. I was going on to say, when I answered you as I did, that if it was Monsieur Denèvres he deserved considerate treatment, seeing that, were I free to take him, I would have refused him.' 'Revolting humbug!' exclaimed my uncle. 'The hoyden wanted little Rousseau, and he plugged her, I'll warrant; and now she's having a try for little Denèvres . . . that is, until a third comes along to be seduced.' I had nothing to say in reply to such language, understanding too well what prompted it. Besides, what my uncle had just said about M. Rousseau rendered me speechless, and my heart choked me. . . .

"Denèvres found a chance of speaking to me again. I treated him the more gently, as I was suffering the same anguish as himself, convinced as I was that M. Rousseau was courting Mlle Stallin. I felt compassion for him and for myself. . . . But I advised him to turn his thoughts elsewhere for a wife. 'It is impossible, Mademoiselle Marguerite!' he answered. 'My heart is yours, and no one else will ever have it; nor my body either, for I will not give the one without the other. If I must wait until you are twenty-five, then I shall wait.' I tried to dissuade him, but he was firm. . . . Unfortunately my uncle had overheard us without my suspecting it. The way in which I had spoken to Denèvres put him in a passion, and he concluded that, if I did not like the man, at any rate I was inclined to marriage, since I had so readily put M. Denèvres in M. Rousseau's place. He went up into the loft armed with a loaded gun and, from the window that looked on to the street, shot M. Denèvres as he was turning to catch a last glimpse of me. The wretched man, mortally wounded, uttered not a single cry, but dragged himself to his house without being seen. For want of proper dressing, for he feared the discovery of my uncle's crime, he died of his wound a fortnight later. Everyone said and believed that he had died for love of me, which is as good as true, though not altogether so. The bequest of all his property, which I still enjoy, confirmed people in this idea. Denèvres on his death-bed wrote a letter in which he told me everything without disguise, begging me to burn it after I had read it. Nevertheless I reproached my uncle for his wicked deed. He answered with scurrilous abuse, and by an act of violence of which I cannot speak. . . . And as I was sobbing afterwards, he told me that he could not endure the idea of my leaving him, and this would have been bound to happen soon, after what had passed between my two lovers and myself. 'I have no more grudge against Denèvres than against Rousseau, nor against these two than against any other man who wants to have you to my detriment.' 'You have succeeded,' I said through my tears, 'and prevented me from marrying! No man shall ever be anything to me; I swear it before God. . . .' I have kept my oath.

"My uncle died in the same year, a week to a day after M. Rousseau's marriage, which was also the last he celebrated, and I still looked after the presbytery. M. Juliot of Chablis had been appointed Curé almost immediately, on account of the scandalous conduct of Père Dumesnil, the acting priest who, getting drunk one evening, got into my bed and obliged me to run away in my night-dress. As he continued to pursue me, I asked the niece of the new Curé to keep me with her. You know that M. Juliot did not stay. A sermon preached to the Benedictines of Auxerre on Saint-Germain's day displeased the Jesuits, who obtained an order for his exile; but he forestalled them. M. Jacquot of Noyers, his cousin, now canon of the cathedral, came to act as curé, and finding me at the presbytery, kept me on there. Again I was the victim of an attempt: not on the part of the respectable M. Jacquot, but of his nephew, a young officer and apparently very well behaved. . . . Finally your brother was appointed, after the dismissal of M. Juliot, and still I remained at the presbytery, so that I have passed nearly all my life there."

Such was Marguerite's story, which I can now complete from information since given to me. She had denied nothing to young Rousseau, and she became pregnant. But her uncle did not give her up on that account. He only fell into a great rage. Her pregnancy was concealed, and the child, a girl, had an extraordinary fate, of which however I will not speak here. . . . The uncle, captivated by his young niece, raped her as soon as she got better; and it was the fear of becoming pregnant through this crime that made her listen to Denèvres, the day on which that wretched man was seen and killed by her jealous uncle. Marianne Taboué was her daughter, probably by Denèvres. Marguerite's god-daughter having died, the parents of this only child were glad secretly to replace her by the daughter of a relative and friend, and this arrangement became permanent because M. and Mme Taboué never had another child. Marguerite had had two more children, one by the monk, and a second by the soldier nephew of M. Jacquot. Now we know enough about my dear Marguerite, far purer after having borne four or five children than many others who have had none. Let us return to her and to myself.

During her tale (in which she took all that she did not actually confess as said) my desire had insensibly revived: on the pretext of steadying the basket, I touched all that I was able to touch. I helped her to dismount when we came to the steep hill, and finally we found ourselves upon the mountain from the top of which we could descry Courgis. It was nearly nine o'clock, so long a time had my attack by the fountain delayed us. There was no chance of another halt. But I formed a bold resolve and was daring enough to put it into execution. They had waited for us to sit down to table. A sister Pinon, destined by the Curé to replace the first of the two mistresses in the girls' school who should leave, had acted for the housekeeper during the day. We were not in bed till ten o'clock.

The Presbytery,* since rebuilt, was, at this time, composed of four rooms on the ground floor: the Curé's room, with a closet, which gave on to the garden; a large central room, which served as dining-room, school-room and bedroom (there were four beds in it: that of the Abbé Thomas at the end, mine near the door into the kitchen, and behind, two little tester-beds for Huet and Melin); and the kitchen, where Marguerite slept, which completed the suite. . . . It is well known that open air of itself increases a leaning to sensuality in people of a sedentary habit; add to this all I had seen and felt during the day. I was beside myself. . . . In the middle of the night, when I could tell by the breathing that everyone was under the dominion of Morpheus, I got up quietly, and, without thinking to what I was exposing myself, went into the kitchen, the door of which was fastened only with a latch. I groped for the housekeeper's bed; I found it; I listened. . . . She was asleep. . . . I slipped in beside her. . . . Marguerite was dreaming. She was murmuring between her lips: "Leave me, dear Denèvres, leave me!" Excited by these words and guided by nature, I gently realised her dream. . . . Marguerite woke too late; she shared my transports. . . . I lay as one dead

*The presbytery of Courgis remains to-day, probably almost unchanged, as it was in the days when Restif lived there, a building all on he ground-floor, separated from the church by the road and the cemetery, and corresponding exactly (Funck-Brentano states) to Restif's description. [Ed.]

in her arms, after displaying an energy that came near to frenzy. Instead of scolding me, she had to revive me; for at first she thought that I had fainted quite away. Come to myself again, it was easy to get rid of me: all my being had dissolved and I was utterly exhausted. I slept until broad daylight next morning, being permitted to rest on after the fatigues of the day before. When I was dressed, I took advantage of my first free moment to go into the kitchen, and there found Marguerite on her knees, in floods of tears. I ran to her and embraced her. This excellent woman, in whom piety was no pose, did not repulse me: "Oh, that I could bear the whole weight of so great a fault alone," she said, "for I brought it about by my imprudent story (although I did not tell you everything). Monsieur Nicolas, I am deeply grieved that you have put this stain upon your life. But you are still so young; you have a long time for repentance! . . . You have poisoned what was before your happiness! I tremble for a young boy whose heart is so tender and so good, lest he grow libertine and I have contributed towards it! . . . My son, dear child, who have so cruelly outraged me, ease my sorrow by keeping your original affection for Jeannette Rousseau. That is the only pure love that you can have in your heart, because it inclines you to virtue. Never be licentious, Monsieur Nicolas! I entreat you by these tears of which you alone are the cause. Do not force and outrage nature, which has formed you for a single exquisite love, and not to glut a greedy wanton; otherwise you will destroy your body and your soul. . . . I fear your brothers. They may harm you through excessive strictness, which will give too great an urgency to your passion for women. They expect too much of youth, and will end by getting nothing. They assume too much strength, too strong an inclination for excellences that are opposed to the senses; they judge others by themselves, no doubt, but there is no one else like them. . . .

Some one is coming; leave me." I withdrew, touched to the soul; but the good impulses stimulated by Marguerite's words were only short-lived.

After this crisis, in which I had enjoyed all the ease and the delights of nakedness, the new faculty, now perfectly developed, became imperious. I respected the chaste attractions of modest Jeannette as much as ever (that is to say, to avoid confusion, Mlle Rousseau excited such lively and delicate sensations that they overshot the mark; if I had loved her two-thirds less, that would have been about what was necessary to fulfil Nature's end). But the other women, whom I loved infinitely less, I desired more hotly than ever. In spite of myself, my imagination pastured on obscene thoughts. I fought them with two weapons, religion and work; but they came back without ceasing, and the crises through which I had already passed prevented any vagueness; they rested on a solid foundation, and I eagerly sought out anything that seemed likely to procure the sensation I so avidly desired. But the occasions were infinitely rare; indeed they would not have existed at all for anyone less ardent than myself, and less dominated by physical and emotional love. We have seen that I showed extraordinary temerity with Marguerite. After this, as I could not get physical satisfaction, mental licentiousness insensibly took the place of organic. . . . I had begun a prose Latin comedy in imitation of Terence, and about two acts of it were written. The first was only a somewhat involved exposition, but in the second I introduced my female characters. The conversation of the men must have been strange enough, as I had nothing but Courtcou's gallantries to draw upon. My characters were all taken from Sacy, from amongst my old companions and the young village girls. I had not enjoyed enough liberty at Bicêtre or Courgis to place the time or scene in either; and the unities of time and place, a natural dramatic rule, led me automatically to set the whole action in the same locality, and begin and finish on the same day. There were three lovers: myself, fond and passionate, a true Pamphylus; Étienne Dumont, a sort of Carinus, lamenting for his stolen mistress as in Terence, but in this case rightly so, because Marie Fouard was the prize, and I too wanted her; and lastly, Courtcou, a libertine who only desired women to slake his brutal lust. This character was entirely my own creation, and never was there one like him in any Comedy; it is impossible to give any idea of him, save by recalling that cannibal I have already mentioned from the neighbourhood of Toulouse. In this part my imagination was disordered in the extreme, and I rioted among Pierre Courtcou's obscene descriptions. I need not say how much I feared lest this note-book should fall into the Abbé Thomas's hands! I always kept it in my pocket.

One day, as I was setting out alone for Sacy on a commission which would take me as far as Joux, the Abbé Thomas saw me transfer this exercise book from the waistcoat I was discarding to the coat I was putting on. He seized it and tried to snatch it from me. I held on to the other end, and playfully refused to let him have it, although I was terrified. Seeing something in Latin, he imagined it contained badly done exercises of which I was ashamed, or possibly my confession, and let it go. Judge how important it was that he should not see that unlucky exercise book, when I add that I had written out in bad Latin the whole story of what had passed between Marguerite and myself! I think I would have been cut in pieces sooner than let him see it. When I had escaped I shivered at the thought of my danger, and began to run. I re-read my cherished exercise book, as I had resolved to sacrifice it. Arrived at Sacy, I went on to Joux after a short rest. On the return journey, under the vines of Sautloup and Montgré, over against my valley which I had not time to visit, I tore the pages out of my exercise book; but carelessly, since I had nothing to fear from any peasants who might pass that way as they were in Latin. However, M. Antoine Foudriat chanced to be dining that very day with his colleague and neighbour the Curé of Joux. He returned to Sacy behind me, found the scattered leaves, collected them, put them together, and read some part of what I had written. I heard of this next day. I was horrified! But when I went trembling to visit the Curé in the course of the morning, he only said to me: "I am indulgent, and will only give you one piece of advice. Another time burn what you do not want to be seen." And, in my presence, he burned all the leaves that he had picked up without re-reading them. This gave me an idea of real courtesy, for I felt that I left my Curé satisfied.

My business demanded that I should return by Vermenton. On the way I dreamed of Jeannette, Marguerite, Marianne, and all the Fairs of my brother's parish. The idea came into my head of celebrating their charms and my desires in French verse, of the technique of which I knew nothing. I had never read anything but the *Cantiques Spirituelles* of M. de Sacy; flat, nerveless verse, with every line eight syllables or under, which had given me no conception of the *cæsura*. . . . I arrived at Vermenton with my head full of this idea. I went to my brother-in-law, Miché Linard, to find out the addresses that I did not know. He sent his eldest daughter with me, and she took me to the doors of the houses, but would not come in; for Marianne Linard was very ugly and did not like being seen. . . . We visited M. Collet last and, as I knew this house, the little girl left me when we got near it, taking away my hat and stick so that I should have to return and dine with her father, who had urged me to do this. As I timidly entered M. Collet's house (I had a letter for his eldest son), my eyes sought for that engaging Colette, whom Jeannette had driven from my mind. I did not see her, and I had not the courage to ask news of her. Instead I saw a charming blonde of eight or nine years, and my eyes were dwelling on her with delight, when Collet brought the answer, a letter and some money. . . . Against my inclination, I went back to dine with my sister Anne's husband.

As we were chatting, I glanced over his little library. I was greedy for books, and inspected his collection, among which I found:

1. *Les Serées,* a very licentious work, on the lines of the *Histoires prodigieuses* of Boistuau and Belleforest, but with this difference: the tales, related in the course of after-supper conversation at gentlemen's country seats, were nearly all comic.

2. *Le Théâtre du Monde,* a pious rather than a licentious production, which dealt with every kind of abuse.

3. *Les Poésies de l'abbé Montreuil.*

4. Two volumes of the *Muses Françoises,* printed in the time of Henri IV, between the two attempts to assassinate him.

5. Some *Histoires de la bibliothèque bleue.*

I asked Linard for these books; he lent them to me and I took them away. But I concealed the *Serées* and the *Poésies* of Montreuil: the latter work amazed me; it gave me my first impression of French gallantry. I could not take my mind away from it! In my wanton divagations I had often desired married women, but I was far from imagining that a place existed, and that the capital of my own country, where adultery was esteemed a grace! Greedily I drank up this new information, and it did not make my morals any the purer. The *Théâtre du Monde,* written throughout in the manner of a lamentation, I found tedious. I was lucky enough to return the *Poésies* and the *Serées* to Linard, during a visit he made to Courgis, without either book having been seen. At the same time, I gave back the *Historiettes bleues,* with which I was already acquainted.

I still had the Théâtre du Monde; but as this was a serious moral work I did not hide it, and the Abbé Thomas took it to read several times. We shall see shortly how ill-founded was my confidence, dealing as I was with fanatics, and fanatics who were jealous, for reasons which they disguised from themselves, of a younger brother, the child of a different mother.

Montreuil's *Poésies* had acquainted me with different kinds of verse, such as *Elegies, Madrigals, Stanzas, Rondeaux, Epigrams* and *Sonnets*; and consequently, with all kinds of metre, and especially the *alexandrine*; but either through not examining them closely enough, or through having the book too short a time, I noticed neither the cæsura nor the interplay of masculine and feminine rhymes. Add to this that the novel subject matter discovered in these verses occupied my mind much more than the form. A veil had fallen when I read Terence, and had been introduced to fine literature: a second veil fell when I read French gallant poetry, and was given a glimpse of the contemporary manners of my own country, in its Court and fashionable world. More than anything else, gallantry held my attention; and the more so as an Abbé was writing. The Abbés I had known so far were strict and pious: a gallant Abbé was a phenomenon. Montreuil telling of light loves with girls and wives, especially the latter, seemed such an extraordinary being that I doubted at times the existence of the customs he described. His attitude to infidelity gave me an agreeable idea of its veniality after marriage; for it must not be thought that I had dreamed of any unfaithfulness in my affair with Marguerite Miné-Covin. I regarded this as a game between children and the fulfilment of a promise she had given me; and when I had since desired married women, I never dreamt of seducing them, but only of satisfying an imperious present need. At Courgis, far from having any idea that wives would yield willingly and gaily to a seducer for their own gratification, I always pictured them as raped with lamentation, and repelling the guilty caresses; and the man as constraining them, made frantic by his desire to satisfy caprices which were seasoned as much by their virtue as their charms. . . . If it had been my fate to remain in the village, Montreuil's book, which had no effect on the blunt mind and senses of M. Linard, would certainly have been very dangerous to me. It would have turned me to a rake, a corrupter of girls and women; as was already Lenain's son, a young Parisian, whose father, formerly the seigneur's steward, had come to take refuge in Sacy. Perhaps I should have become like old Champenois, whom a young girl had recently killed with a blow from a bar; because he tried to violate her, as he had already violated a hundred others.*

My reading of Montreuil strengthened the passion for French verse which I had had for some time; the language was beautiful to me, and apt for expressing the activity of those emotions which at this time were much exaggerated in myself. I had studied stanzas, rondeaux, sonnets, etc., and

*This man resided in the village; the facile pleasures of the town had not enervated his senses, and he had retained, at the age of sixty-five, the same impetuous energy as myself, in the fire of my youth. He laid wait for girls, preferring those with no experience, threw himself upon them and deflowered them; but with such precautions that he harmed them no more than if they had consented. Moreover, many of these girls did not publish their misfortune. The girl who killed him had already been surprised, and made no complaint. The old man thought she had taken a taste for the thing; but when he threw himself upon her the second time, she was ready for him. She seized him in a manner advised by a woman of experience, a servant at a tavern, took his strength from him, and then stunned him. She was acquitted. Two ovals were made of the old man and the girl facing each other: the Paris engravers, devoid of originality almost to a man, profit by the merest trifles rather than exercise invention.

had meant to take them as models: but, as we know, I gave back the book too soon. However I managed to construct some alexandrines, without cæsura or elision, counting the mutes at the end of the line, and not varying masculine with feminine rhymes, because I was not aware of this distinction. Even I was astonished at the harshness of my lines; only a few in which the rules had been observed by chance flowed easily. After I had constructed some thousands of lines, obscene as was my custom, it must be said to my credit that I found them very disagreeable! But a God other than Apollo inspired me, and I was not discouraged. I wanted a subject for a poem, and this is what presented itself to my imagination: naturally it was not suggested, and should throw some light on what must be regarded as genuinely spontaneous ideas.

I imagined that I had done something great, that I had rendered the State an important service: and this was conceived according to my knowledge of military art at the time. I rallied a whole army to the charge, when it was in flight, and leading it, sabre in hand, cut the enemy in pieces. Then I took their Capital, a city at least as big as Paris, and gave it to the King. Clearly so magnificent a service was worthy of reward. The King asked me what I desired, and I answered: "Sire, I have no care for riches. I only ask that you give me the lands of Rü, of Rôs, of Grange-à-la-Sœur, of La Chapelle, of Grandpré, and the Valley as far as the Fontaines de Joux; Boutparc and all that stands in a line with it (this included my valley), the Fontaines à la Creuse; and finally the little estate of Vauxdupuits, and that you generously recompense those ejected. Also I ask you to surround my property with a wall twenty-five feet high and six deep; and to build me a fine house with twenty-eight rooms upon the hill of la Meule, which shall have a courtyard below, and a garden watered by a stream drawn from the

Fontaines de Joux; and a stable for sheep and cattle and draught-horses. And there shall be bees and fowls and geese, and, above all, a fine aviary standing over an acre and well wired, where I shall keep every kind of bird, and have waterfalls in summer to cool them, and stoves in winter to warm them." After these childish requests which my inexperience made to the King, I came at last to my chief desire. But here I was brought to a stop for several days, undecided whether I should ask the King to give me Jeannette only in marriage, to live with me on my estate, or whether I should pursue my licentious plan. An illuminating thought decided me: "How stupid I am! After all, this is only imaginary, and my estate and the girls I shall have there are just a subject for a poem; it cannot take Jeannette away from me because she will never know anything about it." Therefore, without risking anything, I made my last request to the King: "Sire, I have a boon to ask of you which shall put a crown to all the others: that I may choose twelve young girls, whom no one may refuse me, to keep with me in my enclosure." The King was taken aback, fearing that I was going to ask for some Princess. I hastened to reassure him: "Sire, I will take these twelve young girls from three villages only: Courgis, Nitry, and Sacy." At once the King granted my request, and added that no one should oppose my twelve-fold choice.* Such were the foundations of my poem. But to select the girls was no slight matter. I always began with Jeannette; but from the moment that I assumed her chosen, my imagination could add no other; the beautiful Rousseau, more perfect than them all, absorbed me completely. I had to summon all my resolution and my plot to help me, and

*All peasants have the same erroneous idea of the omnipotence of God in things physical and of the King in things social. For instance, I had no doubt that legally the King could force any man to give me his wife or daughter, and everyone in Sacy shared the same belief. This opinion is still held by all Oriental peoples.

remind myself that it exacted twelve girls, who should each be my mistress for one month. I began again with Jeannette, and her month lasted the whole year. I was annoyed at not being able to get on with my work; I saw that, if I wrote the first canto (which I did not call "canto," never having seen an epic,* but *section*), I should have said all there was to say and have nothing left for the eleven others. Then I had the idea of putting her last, but I could not make myself do this. Finally, to write my poem at all, I had to exclude Jeannette from it, promising her in my heart to write her a better one when I had gained experience at the expense of those who were not her equals. Having settled this question, I began my work.

These were my twelve heroines:

1. Jeannette. In spite of all my resolutions, she found her way in as the first and the last; I wanted December to be the first month of the year because it was the month of her birth, and because it is the month in which the days begin to get longer.

2. Marianne Taboué. She had to be the first and the best treated after Jeannette.

3. Edmée Boissard of Nitry.

4. Ursule Simon, that pretty cousin of whom I should have done well to remind myself otherwise.

5. The beautiful Ursule Lamas of Nitry.

6. Marie Fouard of Sacy.

7. Marguerite Bourdillat of Sacy.

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*Still I had my Virgil. But I was only at the *Eclogues*, and I never took the book up except to work at it, because it was so difficult that all pleasure in reading was taken away. Would one believe that I, a shepherd, did not like the Eclogues? The pastoral ideas of Virgil had not enough of nature in them for me; they were those of a Parisian in Rome. For the same reason I have never liked the shepherds of the opera, nor the peasants of the Théâtre-Italien, with the exception of the two fathers in *Rose et Colas*.

8. Nannette Bourdillat of Courgis.

9. Rebecca Levêque of Laloge, the elder sister of Marie-Jeanne.

10. Agathe Adine of Courgis.

11. Marie Nollin of Courgis.

12. Mme Chevrier of Courgis, counted a "girl" because her pious husband had vowed himself to chastity.

With the success of my bold assault on Marguerite Pâris I grew wanton, yet without losing anything of my ingenuousness, I might almost say, of my innocence. . . . I was still frank and sincere, and incapable of a base action; my only vice, if it is one, was an ungovernable desire for pleasure with women. All other pleasures seemed insipid. Before I had seen Jeannette, I had entertained the idea of a plurality; but this amiable girl had dispelled it, and the taste only repossessed me by the force of an amorous disposition, unexercised or unsatisfied. If Jeannette had been my wife and I had been able to appease this impulse by possession as much as was necessary, I should have remained monogamous for a long time; but this did not come to pass, and as Marguerite, once surprised, shut the door to opportunity, imagination wandered afield; it was not the mind that fermented the senses; it was the impetus of the senses which carried away the mind. My poem was a delirium in bad rhyme, with hiatuses and without cæsura. It might have been called: *The Twelve Months*, or better still *My Twelve Labours*. It began with the last section: *November*, or *Madame Chevrier*. *October* followed, and so retrogressively to *January*. Finally I did *December* and my treatment of this beloved month was, in modesty and passion, quite different from the others. Not all the cantos were long. Each began with the story of my choice, based on the charms of its heroine (which were described in detail) and ended with my first possession. I imagined all the girls as yielding to force with lamentations, although my actual experience had been quite otherwise; apparently the brutality of Courtcou had stimulated my grosser vein. . . . When I reached the first month, which I did last, I described my walled estate, and, having in my own fashion embellished the scene of the action, I came to my Jeannette. My behaviour with her was exactly as though I had loved no one else: to clear myself in her eyes, I made her believe that my position was not a reward, but a punishment due to the jealousy of my enemies; that I was forced to have twelve women, and to give children to all the twelve under pain of death. Thus I justified myself before her, and vowed that I would love no one but her, nor approach the other women save through fear. This little device enabled me to finish my first canto, which contained as many lines as the eleven others put together.

I found the time for this composition during recreation and my various journeys, or when I was absolutely alone in the class-room. I always carried an ink-horn in my pocket; and what of my poem was done or still to be done, was divided into two equal parts and stowed in the lining of my ratteen overcoat; no one shared my secret. At first my eagerness for work was such that any place was good enough to write in; it did not matter where I was; no free moment was wasted. Failing the physical satisfaction so ardently desired, my imagination gorged itself on ideas, which at last produced a sort of exhaustion. My poem was finished in June or July of 1749, in the middle of my fifteenth year.*

*It is hardly possible to give an idea of my verse at this time. I cannot remember a single line of my poem. But I found another one, in my *Tertius Codex*, which illustrates my manner. It will be mentioned in the year 1753 under the title *Séjour des Charmes.* I find this note in my exercise book: "*In 1749 I composed at Courgis a poem also entitled:* Le Séjour des Graces ou des Charmes, *which was unfortunately found in the lining of my coat by the Abbé Thomas, who took it*

I had noticed in Montreuil that an *Envoi* was sometimes added to poetic works: mine was addressed to *Mlle Jeannette Rousseau.* But I touch on the final catastrophe!

The precision with which I took advantage of every moment of leisure for writing was certainly noticed; but I was so secretive and worked with so much prudence that I was never taken by surprise. An incident trifling in itself, nourished suspicion. I did most of my writing on the way to Saint-Cyr. One evening I sat down in the meadow, which borders the road where it begins to descend the hill opposite to the hill of Courgis: it was a delightful place and covered with that blue flower which is used to colour eggs. I was in excellent vein and wanted to finish my poem. It was early and a beautifully clear day. I completely lost myself, and it was nearly night when I emerged from my trance. I got up and ran, but night was close upon me before I reached Saint-Cyr. I left without resting, but did not reach Courgis until nine o'clock. I was asked whether the meat had not yet come when I got to Saint-Cyr. I was considerably embarrassed. If I said it had not arrived, the lie was bound to be found out; if I said that I had been amusing myself, it would have been regarded as a crime: thus does excessive strictness compel to deceit. I had to find some plausible story which could not be disproved and which would fully exonerate me.

to our elder brother, the Curé of Courgis. The latter, who was also my god-father, found the poem so wicked, and each line so strikingly obscene, that he did not think any ordinary method of correction sufficient. I was told that he cast the poem with abhorrence before the altar in his church, and exonerated himself before God, saying that he had done nothing that could have given me the idea for such an infamous work. . . . Afterwards he deposited it in the Sacristy and, I was told, kept it there as a weapon against me. But what use could it be? Caylus had just died. . . . Five years later (1753) – I wrote a poem in the same manner, but more decent." I have heard since that, after the Huet-Melin catastrophe, the Curé only kept my verses to humble himself, and that finally he burned them. Alas, he should have done this before showing them to my father. Is a man guilty when in delirium or fever? Following this note, and in the margin, is an apostil which will find its place on the fifth of November, 1753.

(I was forced to become a story-teller long before I wrote stories!) Some weeks earlier, when I was ascending the Colons hill in a thick fog, I had seen an animal ten paces in front of me which I took at first for a dog. I shuddered! But, looking more closely, I saw it was a wolf, and became bold to rashness. I put down my bundle and chased it with stones for more than fifty paces. Coming back, I found its mate trying to get its nose into my basket; fortunately the lid was fastened with a stick. I charged my new enemy as I had attacked her companion, and was left the victor. Naturally taciturn, I did not mention the adventure; but on this occasion, as I needed an excuse, it occurred to me that a transposition would not be a lie; and I decided to relate this incident, saving my conscience by adding in a whisper: *"a month ago."* However I was not questioned that evening as some one was taking supper with us; I was merely treated with extreme coldness. I was certain that my care in keeping everything concealed saved me from any but a general suspicion, and that no one could have the remotest idea of what I was writing.

The next day, Sunday, was occupied by Matins and High Mass. I had my tale ready in my head, and stuck to it until the sermon, in the course of which, I know not in what connection, M. le Curé repeated a singular passage from St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei.* I had paid little attention to him until then, but this passage roused me. It concerned the sack of Rome by the Barbarians. The preacher said that, according to the Saint, "it was the intention that made the sin; thus the Christian women who were violated by the Vandals were not less chaste for it, and the virgins none the less virgins." This anecdote made me think of Sister Marguerite, who had seemed very sad since my assault, and I decided to work upon her with this passage from the *De Civitate Dei.* Then, my fancy straying to the

Barbarians, I thought about soldiers; and combining the thought of soldiers with my two wolves, they blended so well that an interesting romance was the result. . . . Thanks to my brother's piety, High Mass at Courgis lasted from nine till midday, and we dined immediately after service: thus the Abbé Thomas had no time to question me. We sat down to table. One of us began to read, but was stopped with a gesture. When the soup was finished, the Abbé Thomas made his complaint against me. The Curé looked at me as though to say: "What answer have you?" "I left earlier than usual yesterday," I replied modestly, "and I should have been home before nightfall, but for a little accident. I had not intended to mention it so as not to be a cause of anxiety another time. . . . I was crossing the high road when I saw five or six men coming from Auxerre, who made me a sign to wait for them. I hesitated, but finally decided that they might want to ask the way, so I waited for them. When they came nearer, I saw with some dismay that they were soldiers with recruits. They asked me if I wanted to enlist, and I answered that I was too young, as I was only fifteen. 'That's all right,' said one of the recruits. 'He will grow. He must enlist.' They seized me. I saw it was useless to resist, and reflected that they were bound to pass through Noyers, where my father was well known, and that there I could ask for help from our relations and friends. So I walked with them, looking out for any chance to escape. They would not stop at Monsieur Quatrevaux's in Préhy, probably for fear that I should be known there. My only hope of escape was in Noyers. . . . They asked me if I knew anyone there, and I said no; it was scarcely a lie, because I do not personally know any of those on whom I counted, such as Monsieur Miré the mayor, and Monsieur Julien the doctor, and Monsieur Perraut, all of whom I know only by name. Fortunately, when we came opposite the valley of Puits-debond, I noticed that I was about a hundred paces in front of them and, trusting to my fleetness, dashed across a field, jumping the furrows four at a time, although I was burdened with my basket. They shouted and ran after me: but the farther I ran the more I gained on them. At last I reached a little thicket on the other side of the valley, and the brush concealed me from them. I was not such a fool as to hide there. I went on in a straight line and down another valley, through which runs the road from Préhy to Saint-Cyr. I do not know if they followed me beyond the wood; but my eyes are as good as my legs, and I think I saw them on the borders of the wood when I was near Saint-Cyr. So they probably searched it. On the return journey night had fallen, and I was no longer afraid of them."

While I was telling this story, I glanced from time to time at my audience of five, and watched with satisfaction the emotions of fear and hope and joy pass across the faces as I proceeded. The Curé smiled, saying: "That was very well told!" The Abbé smiled because the Curé smiled; Marguerite stared at me with her mouth half open, and I could see that my narrative had interested her. Huet's face expressed admiration; Melin skipped for joy; and afterwards they gave two different examples of my fleetness of foot, which I had proved to them many times. Thus I avoided a host of embarrassing questions: for, although they had no idea of my hardihood towards Marguerite, or the strange thoughts which filled my mind, my natural vehemence and my ardent yet reserved character kept the Abbé Thomas in a perpetual state of vague suspicion.

There was no interval after dinner on Sundays and feast days; we went straight in to the confirmation class. I and my two schoolfellows sat on the bench nearest the choir rail, with the other boys behind us. On the other side, separated by the aisle from the nave to the choir, were the girls, the big ones on the front bench (and there were a good many, because the Jansenists give the first communion late),* then the rather younger girls, and so on according to age. The priest walked up and down the central aisle. The youngest children were in a side Chapel under the Abbé Thomas. . . . This class was an exquisite entertainment to me: I saw the prettiest girls, heard them addressed by name, and used to speculate on their intelligence as displayed by their memories, while my ears were caressed by the harmonious voices of these engaging creatures. (Oh, if the Jansenists had had any suspicion of that pleasure!) I should have been even happier if Jeannette had been my brother's penitent, instead of confessing to the Chaplain; then she would still have been in the class, and I should have been her fellow Catechumen. However, young Communicants were not entirely dispensed from coming to elementary instruction; indeed often, on the pretext of doing them an honour and of inspiring healthy emulation in the more ignorant non-Communicants, their opinion would be asked on some point in question. Thus I sometimes had the pleasure of seeing Jeannette Rousseau rise with a blush and curtsey prettily; I could look at her graceful figure, and hear the silver tones of her sweet voice. On the day of which we are speaking she attended the class, and I had never seen her look so pretty. The heart is lighter, when released from anxiety, than if it had never been troubled, as are the dancer's feet when she throws aside the leaden soles, and I was exhilarated by the way in which I had got out of my fix. "If fair Jeannette is ever my wife," I said to myself, "I will relate this incident to prove that her husband is no fool." While I was turning this over in my mind, the Curé was questioning a pretty little girl called Adine: he asked her what was meant by a lie. She answered from her Catechism: "It is to speak what is not true with intention to deceive." He pursued the point and asked her whether a pointless lie told in jest was a great sin. "No, Monsieur," answered the little imp, "because I tell that sort every day." The Curé bit his lips to check a smile: "My daughter, you are not here to make your confession," he said. "I could argue the point with you, but I prefer to put the question to some one better informed than you. . . . Jeannette Rousseau, tell me whether to lie in jest is a great sin?" "We should never lie, even in fun," answered the beautiful girl, "because we are in the presence of God, and we fail in reverence to Him thereby." "Good, very good!" said the pastor. "I am pleased with that answer. . . . Nicolas Restif, give us another reason." "In St. Matthew, Jesus Christ says that men must render account of every idle word," I replied, "and a lie, however trivial, is worse." "Give us in addition a reason based on the principles of morality." "I think that it is impossible to lie, even in jest, without impairing the sensitiveness of conscience and, by such indulgence, guilty in itself, accustoming it to regard the most criminal actions without horror." "So a lie told on some one else's behalf, for example, is not permitted?" "I think not; although ethically it can only be a very minor fault if the generosity of our action is such that, by it, we gain as much sensitiveness as the lie takes away." "And before God?" "Before God a lie is always a sin, because God is truth." "Very good! What have you to say about a carefully planned lie to get out of a difficulty and hide a possibly criminal action, when it would be equally to the interest of the questioner and the questioned that it should be known?" "The sin is doubled, since the lie conceals a wound in the soul which may cause its death. . . . But when it is a question of exonerating ourselves, we give little thought to what is good or bad; we speak instinctively; for all men since our first father in the earthly paradise try to exonerate themselves." "This, then, is one of the most criminal kinds of lie!" continued the pastor, signing to me to sit down. And I thought to myself that he had not believed a word of the story I had told at dinner, or that, if he had believed it then, he did not believe it now.

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*Their reason for this is that the first Communion is an important step, which necessitates full mental development and untouched innocence; two things which are almost incompatible, for when reason comes, innocence goes.

While I was speaking I had been pleasurably aware of Jeannette's beautiful eyes fixed upon me; at first I had been nervous, but I grew bolder insensibly; and I noticed how the whole class admired my doctrine.

After elementary instruction, the boys recited the Epistle for the day, and the girls the Gospel. The pastor chose one of us to say the beginning, another the middle and another the end as he thought fit, so that we all had to learn the whole of it. Everyone's memory was bad that day. Now it should be observed that after my schoolfellows and I had learnt the whole of the New Testament, by ten or twelve verses a day, we were made to recite a Gospel or an Apostolic Epistle from one end to the other. My fellow pupils constantly foundered. But it was enough for me, who never forgot anything, to re-read my Gospel twice, and I was ready to recite it on Saturday. I went straight forward on the track of the sense without hesitation, but I changed some of the words. The Abbé Thomas, who wanted to find fault with me, counted my synonyms as mistakes, and, as there was a limit set on these, I was . . . whipped (to the great indignation of Marguerite!) while my comrades, who fell short a hundred times, were treated with indulgence. I was indignant, and the good Chaplain, told about it by Marguerite, would not believe her until the Abbé Thomas admitted it in the presence of the Curé. "Astonishing!" said the Curé.

"He knows the Gospel by heart?" "Yes, and with no hesitation; but he changed more than a hundred words." The Curé told the Abbé Thomas he had done wrong, and that to disallow correct synonyms was to destroy the child's judgment. . . . And it was apparently by way of recompense that the Curé, who knew that I had recited the Acts on the evening before, now said to me: "Nicolas, face the class and recite the Acts of the Apostles." I trembled with joy at this command. I began at the first chapter, and continued very much more quickly than it is usual to read; and if twice I made a mistake I corrected myself. All the children were looking at me, especially the girls. But I saw no one except Jeannette. When I had finished, the pastor resumed: "My children, I recommend the study of your religion to you. If I enjoined on you something that I do not impose on my own pupils, you might have reason for discouragement; but this young man is one of my pupils; he is my brother. And do not imagine that he can only recite the historical books; I am now going to ask him for the Epistle to the Romans and he will say it." He made me stand up, and I recited half of the first chapter. He told me to go on to the second, and then to the last, as the bell for Vespers was ringing. I made no mistake; it was what I was learning at the moment. . . . How proud I was! At bottom nothing but a little pedant, I would not have changed places at that moment with a noble warrior who had just blasted his country's enemies.

We went back to the Presbytery with the Abbé Thomas for a moment after the class, while the bell was rung for Vespers. My schoolfellows told Marguerite what had happened. She showed a special interest in me, and I saw her go towards the Chaplain's house. She was just returning as we were setting out again for the church, and pulled me by the coat: "After Vespers, I shall go to the Curé's field to look at the quickset hedge; I shall ask for you as my escort. I have something to tell you." These few words made me long impatiently for the end of Vespers. Directly the Office was finished, I tried to get ahead of my companions, but Abbé Thomas was watching me. The housekeeper made her request, and no one ever refused her anything. On the way, we only spoke of indifferent matters. When we reached the Curé's field, Marguerite sat down under the hedge where it was thickest. She was in her Sunday clothes, and looked charming! My heart quickened. I wanted to throw myself into her arms. She did not at all repulse me; on the contrary, she gathered me to her: "You have wiped out the memory of Louis Denèvres from my heart, Monsieur Nicolas; ah, how dear you are to me!" "Prove it," I replied, "according to what you know I desire." "Yes, I will prove it, but not as you ask; I fear God, and will not offend Him. . . . But you are now the being I should most love. . . . I am pregnant. . . ." At this unexpected word, I grew pale – not through fear of having to marry Marguerite: at that moment, under the dominion of her presence, her charm, and of my duty, I could have consented without effort. But I saw a heavy cloud of rebuke shaping above my head and, under my feet, an abyss of ruin. . . . How to study, if married? That was my first anxiety; Jeannette did not enter my mind, until this best of women continued speaking: "You are troubled," she said. "Are you afraid of marrying me?" "No, no!" I exclaimed. "No, Marguerite! You are dear to me, and doubly so by your pregnancy. You are to me as was Glycera to Pamphylus!" "I am satisfied," answered Marguerite. "My child's father is sensitive and tender. . . . There, there, my friend: I will not exact such a marriage. I love you tenderly; but I love you for yourself. Have no fear that I shall reveal my condition, or that I could wish to give you a wife more than twice your age, who would be an old woman in the full vigour of your youth. No, dear friend; dream on of Jeannette, and think of no one but her. May she be your wife one day, for only with her will you find happiness. Could I frustrate your happiness, and expose you to the cruel afflictions which your brothers and everyone else would heap upon you? Could I take away your station to give one to your child, and sacrifice you to a creature yet unborn, who may not be your equal; or who may be a girl and, through my precautions, have no need to be legitimate? We are commoners, and in Paris, where I shall bring up my child, he will be as good as anyone else. Calm yourself, little friend; I am not going to reproach you. What, I reproach you, who have made me a mother? It is for that very thing that I am in your debt; no other consolation has such efficacy, and I owe it to you. You have given me some one to love innocently all the rest of my days; a child that is all mine, and for whom I alone am responsible (a happiness I have never yet enjoyed): that is a present which I will never forget. . . . My young friend, you must know what I have decided: when I can no longer hide my condition, I shall go to Paris on the pretext of seeing my brother, who is the King's pantler at Versailles: I will confide in a trustworthy relative, without mentioning your name; and there I will lie in. I will put out my son or daughter to nurse, and return here for two years; that is, until it is weaned; and after that I shall never again be parted from my child. I will not write to you, for fear of misadventure. On my return, I will tell you the sex of our child, and all my arrangements so that you may be ready to come to him some day. Warn me when you notice that, in spite of my precautions, my condition begins to show. . . . Now let us go. If walls have ears, hedges are even less deaf." While Marguerite was speaking, I was in a tempest. My thoughts rolled and tumbled like pebbles shaken in a barrel: pleasure in becoming a father at my age (eh! but I had been one since the 14th of May, 1746, only I did not know it!); Marguerite's generosity; the image of Jeannette which was omnipresent; my fears, had the housekeeper been like other women; my good fortune in finding at this, the beginning of my life, such excellence in people that it counterbalanced the hatred of my brothers and my own natural malice (alas! it gave me a feeling of security! yes, the goodness of my father and mother, of kind aunt Madelon, of grandfather Ferlet; of Julie Barbier, Jeannette, Mother Saint-Augustin, Esther, Madame Bossu, and lastly Marguerite, without mentioning those who came after, gave me a sense of security which cost me dear later on!), all these thoughts, I say, passed through my mind, and held me enchained. But a grievous constriction followed this momentary opening of my heart, the memory of which is still painful to me. I kissed Marguerite silently and with brimming eyes, and her tears responded to mine. . . . I went to inspect the hedge alone, while the housekeeper made as though she was returning home.

Good God, what a day, and how full to overflowing! It contained more than ten years of the life of other boys of my age. But I have had many such: my life has not been empty, reader; every day has been filled. . . .

As I was coming back from the Curé's field by the valley through which runs the Garenne road (a charming walk if my brothers' pedantry had not spoiled it for me), I met Jeannette alone. I blushed and trembled, and greeted her awkwardly, turning away my eyes. . . . My distress must certainly have revealed my secret passion, but I was too young for her to count upon my stability. I noticed that my blush made her colour in turn, and I trembled. . . . Before entering the town, I looked back and saw Marguerite, who I thought had gone back to the Presbytery, talking eagerly with Mlle Rousseau and pointing to me (I never knew what she said to her). My heart quickened, and I sweated from every pore at the thought: "Is she telling her that I love her?" I fled as though some danger threatened me. . . . (To see me flying thus in bashful modesty from the being I adored, who could have imagined that I had just written about her and others more than a hundred pages of obscene verse? Judge men by appearances after that!) Marguerite entered the house alone a quarter of an hour later. The bell rang for prayer, and during it I watched Jeannette and thought she seemed moved and embarrassed by my attention. What did that signify?

On the following Wednesday I was sent to Lichères for some lime. I passed through woods, which, although more than two leagues from my village, were continuous with the Nitry woods; these began at Terre-rouge, a step from Vaudenjean, at the foot of which was my father's house. The thought that, by following these woods, I should come into those which I had so often visited in search of nests and nuts and strawberries, struck me sharply as I walked. And adding to this the memory of Jeannette, and of Marguerite, pregnant but generously saving me from all ill-consequences of my action, I burst into tears which bore witness to a soul yet innocent. . . . When I got to Lichères I was very thirsty. Lemoine, the lime merchant, gave me white wine, which I found very good, and cream cheese of which I was passionately fond. We ate together, and I drank more wine than I had ever drunk in my life. I drank with intention, so as to play the man: I was in love, and I was a father. . . . I noticed that I carried wine like a German. Lemoine began to stammer in his speech, and I pitied him.

On leaving Lichères, I extracted my poem from the lining of my coat and began to re-read it. Save for a few lines which were not melodious, the first canto pleased me. The others excited my lubricity, already stimulated by wine. I chanted them aloud through the woods, not in the manner of actors, with which I was unacquainted, but like a man preaching. I had just finished when I heard a burst of laughter behind me. I turned round in surprise. Two charcoal burners of Vaucharmes on their way home had been following me for half an hour and had overheard practically everything! I distrusted everybody, and was a little uneasy. "What is it?" asked one of them. "It rhymes like the Tragedy of *Sainte-Reine.*" "It's a speech," said the other. "No, no, more likely a prayer; because he said something about adoration" (since reading Montreuil I had used this term instead of love). "It is a Litany." I looked closely at the two men, with whom I was not acquainted, to see whether they were laughing at me, or whether their stupidity had prevented them from understanding: for instead of the gross words which I had found in Martial and in other Latin poets; in *Chorier*, and also in certain orgies of the French wits, I had used words of my own invention, which could not have been understood by these people; I soon perceived that they had spoken in all simplicity, and also that I had had a lucky escape! Supposing I had been overheard by some more intelligent person, such as M. Stallin . . . M. Rousseau, father or son . . . the Abbé Thomas! I shuddered at the idea, and resolved to take my poem out of the lining of my coat and hide it in the garden wall by removing a stone which I could exactly replace. And I did this on my return. . . . After the two woodcutters had left me for the road to Vaucharmes, from which curiosity had made them stray, my imagination, heated by my reading and by wine, brooded on lascivious pictures: I brutally pursued the thought of possessing Mme Chevrier, and, in developing this fantasy, passed beyond all decency. . . . I have noticed since that adultery corrupts the mind more quickly than any other form of unchastity; and that the one which tends least to depravity and is least dangerous to character, is that with public women. It is the adulteress, and not these latter, who causes the horrible corruption in our large towns.

A month slipped by after this journey. I watched Sister Marguerite, and noticed that her skirts began to get a little shorter in front, and warned her in these words: "Your skirts will soon be in the Nitry fashion." She understood at once; for it is common knowledge throughout the canton that Nitry women wear the skirt short in front and with a tail behind – a fashion which has something wanton about it. Marguerite took temporary measures to correct the irregularity in her dress, and began to talk about her affairs in Paris. She even got her brother to write, asking her to stay with him. The day of her departure was fixed; but she promised the Curé to return when her business was at an end: "For I prefer," she said, "a plain and humble village life to the softer and more varied one of a town."

She left on Wednesday, very early in the morning so that I should be able to get back in good time; for she had asked for me to lead Martin and for another boy to carry her surplus baggage. . . . Our conversation was both fond and moving: I was touched by the way in which Marguerite had behaved, and she *adored me in spite of herself,* because I had made her a mother. I had expunged Denèvres' image from her heart, which, since his fatal accident, she had guarded there with gentle melancholy; *dead* she had loved him in gratitude, as she had ceased in duty to love M. Rousseau *married.* . . . After these admissions and some other conversation, she advised me to be prudent and well behaved. Then she spoke about our child, and told me that, if it lived, she would secure to it the inheritance of everything she had, and if not, then there was no one in the world nearer to her than myself. I have always admired the beautiful character of this woman, and the good sense which made her so clear-sighted in spite of her genuine piety. . . . Her memory is cherished in my heart with that of Jeannette, and will be cherished there to my last breath. . . .

Such useful and serious discourse completely engrossed our attention during the three hours' journey, so that we sighted the gates of Auxerre with amazement! We dined with Mme Jeudi, and I saw the young wife, Sophie, as a penitent, in a great bonnet with paper horns. Her crime was that she had become pregnant by her husband without her mother's permission. The son-in-law had been sent back to his parents as a rake and a seducer. . . . And these two poor young people were languishing to death from separation! Marguerite did all that she could, as far as piety permitted, to mitigate Sophie's lot; but she could gain nothing for her; her crime was too black! *She had dipped herself a second time in original sin!* I have heard since that the young husband was the first victim, and that poor amiable Sophie only survived him long enough to give birth to twins, a boy and a girl. Drop a tear for them, tender hearts, and curse the insensate *puritanism* of their step-mother! . . .

After dinner, which was one of the saddest I have ever eaten, I said farewell to Marguerite, but, as she was not leaving until Thursday morning by the boat, she escorted me as far as the Porte-du-Pont, and then, seeing that there were too many people about for us to talk freely, she came on as far as Saint-Gervais. And it was here, under a ruined archway near the church, that we embraced tenderly, and with tears of a bitterness which seemed to presage an eternal farewell. "Be good," Marguerite said over and over, "if you would be happy. Conceal your sentiments if you would some day win Jeannette, and try to gain the friendship of her brother. That young man will make his way. He is much liked by Mme de Varennes, the sister of M. le Baron de Courgis, and she wants to give him a place in her household as secretary. Moreover he loves his sister tenderly. But do not confide in anyone too soon; your youth would make any such step ridiculous. There is a sinister rumour abroad that you write strange things! I have gone surety for you. Never write anything of the sort; be prudent. Harsh eyes are upon you. . . . Never let your brothers catch you in an unfavourable light. You have some love for religion although you . . . occasionally go astray; use it to please them. A fault committed in secret is still a fault, because it is known to God; but a fault which became known to your brothers would be an unpardonable crime, the effects of which would poison all the rest of your youth – perhaps your whole life . . . perhaps also the lives of your father and mother; for no opportunity will be neglected to cut short your education. God is an indulgent father, always ready to pardon: but your brothers, as far as you are concerned, are judges who understand nothing but punishment. I have said too much, rendering justice as I do to their piety; but I give you this advice because it is due to you. . . . Farewell, Monsieur Restif" (it was the first time she had addressed me by my surname), "my heart is heavy at leaving you, because I am afraid for you. Above all, prudence! I have saved you from being caught more than once, without your being aware of it: but now there will be no one on your side. . . ." She embraced me, pressing me to her heart. "Leave me," she said, "that I may dry my tears before returning. . . ." I left her, looking back twenty times before the bend round the hill hid St. Gervais from me. I saw her come out from under the arch (the same where later I so bitterly lamented a young beauty who also desired my happiness) and she waved her handkerchief in farewell. I held out my arms to her as I passed behind the hill, and she raised hers to heaven in so sudden a gesture that I was startled. Two steps more, and I could no longer see her. . . .

I never saw her again! Our parting was for ever! I returned in deep meditation, reflecting upon her warnings, and profoundly aware of the intensest affection for this generous woman. When I reached the valley of Montaléry, near by the fountain where we had picnicked, my sad tenderness increased: I stopped; and raising my voice, uttered these words adapted from the Lamentations of Jeremiah: "O generous woman, whose goodness moves me so, how could you desert me, and leave me alone and without help? . . . Why shall I never see you again, O woman who has rendered good for evil? . . . Marguerite! May my tongue dry and cleave to my palate if I ever pronounce your name without blessing it. . . . Farewell, O Marguerite, who rested beside me in this place!" (and my sobs stifled me). "I shall never see you here again! . . . Poor bowed down heart, poor fainting heart, ah, who will bring back your friend? Who will give back my generous Marguerite? . . . Poor unhappy Marguerite! When young she lost her lover; to-day her lover loses her. Farewell, farewell, Marguerite, O pearl in goodness as in name! I say farewell, but I will never forget you!"

I could not eat my viaticum, but continued on my way singing. The sun was getting low in the heavens; for my conversation with Marguerite below the Saint-Gervais arch had been a long one. . . . At the top of the pass which overlooks the Curial field, I caught sight of my schoolfellows coming to meet me. . . . I was vexed; there was still so much to say to myself. . . . They ran up asking how I had left Sister Marguerite. "As a kind mother, grieved to part from her children." Like a couple of mischievous schoolboys, they mounted an ass each, and told me as we went along that Sister Pinon, that pious young woman who was to replace one of the schoolmistresses, was to look after the house, during Marguerite's absence. Huet was full of her praises. She was of a type which I have never admired, but which is attractive enough to a superficial heart: her features were sufficiently regular and well proportioned; she had a sly expression, high colouring and a skin covered with down; her limbs were strong and she gave an impression of vigour. I demanded delicacy in women; Jeannette was the most dainty of any girl I had yet seen, and Marguerite looked more like a lady than a villager. . . . I told Huet that we had lost the best of housekeepers, and the most I hoped was that Sister Pinon would partly recompense us. "She won't," said Melin, rolling on the ground, as his ass kicked him off. "She has scolded me already: and I have behaved worse a hundred times with Marguerite without her saying a word. . . . Your Sister Pinon is a toady and a tale-bearer; I tell you and it's true." The young idiot remounted his ass and dashed away, only to fall off again. . . . Thus we arrived at the Presbytery, the two asses more tired by a quarter of a league with my schoolfellows than after the whole journey with me. I have always been kind and humane to useful animals, as was my father.

Nothing of importance happened in the first days after Marguerite's departure; but I noticed certain things which made me less circumspect. . . . The Abbé Thomas was healthy and vigorous, and the kind of life he led, even his piety itself, was bound to expose him to cruel fights with the flesh! Sister Pinon, young, plump and fresh, and white of skin now that the field work had stopped, had nothing of Marguerite's noble dignity of manner, but instead a submissive smile which made a visible impression upon him. He had a rival: the new housekeeper made an equally strong impression on

Huet, in spite of the inclination I have hinted at. It was a question as to which of the two was more eager to serve her. Her robust charms and bad shoes left me unmoved; I watched my master and schoolfellow with pity, and said privately: "What gross taste! But what am I thinking of? What would become of me if they shared my tastes and adored Jeannette?" And I congratulated myself on their coarse fibre: I congratulated myself, and despised them none the less.

But the sight of their continued imprudence made me less careful on my own account. I neglected Marguerite's wise advice, thinking – very wrongly! – that his gambols with the Sister, though innocent enough, would make the Abbé less severe in future (quite the contrary! Men try to make up at others' expense what they lose at their own). I was tempted to write a note to Jeannette, declaring my love and entreating her to answer. Nothing could excuse this folly except my ignorance and extreme passion. I regretted beyond measure not having used Marguerite as a mediator to make my declaration. For I forgot that I would not have dared to do this; that it would have nearly killed me to know she had spoken, or to receive the answer. . . . Added to this, a certain instinctive delicacy made it seem an impertinence to ask for anything I did not deserve to obtain. Throughout my life I have noticed that instinct has always guided me better than reason. I wrote the letter. When I used to ring the noon bell and kneel in Jeannette's place, I had noticed a small round hole in the arm-rest; so I rolled my letter into the shape of one of the little candles which are usually lighted in front of Madonnas, inserted it, and closed the hole with wax. I left it there a fortnight. No one noticed it. I had reckoned that the wax would stick to Jeannette's arm and draw her attention to the paper attached to it. (And perhaps she did discover it, read it, and put it back again; for one day, when taking holy water, I dared to raise my eyes to her, and saw the lilies change to roses on her beautiful face. But I have never known for certain.) A fear, only too well-founded, prompted me to take back my love letter one midday, when I recalled Marguerite's advice. I tore my declaration into little bits and, in the extremity of my love-sick superstition, gloried in the thought that Jeannette would kneel on the rent fragments of my thought. When I was serving at Mass next morning I was careful to make certain that they were under the feet and knees of her whom I adored. I collected them at midday to keep as precious relics, and also lest the Curé or the Abbé Thomas should notice them. Unfortunately this access of prudence did not go far enough.

I was aware of the attitude of those on whom I was dependent, and was certain that they would disapprove equally of legitimate love and a criminal passion; indeed I myself hardly distinguished between the two. I kept my salacious poem carefully concealed, but often re-read it with enjoyment, correcting a word here and there. Marguerite's departure had left me in a state of tender melancholy very favourable to composition. I wanted to versify our farewells and add them to my poem, although they were scarcely in key. I even had the hardihood to write at my table, whenever the Abbé Thomas was engaged in his puerile trifling with Sister Pinon, with Huet trying to cut in, and Melin laughing at the three of them. I took no precaution save that of putting my verses under my construe book. One day Melin, who was treacherous and malicious, caught sight of the title of my second *Division, Marianne Taboué*: he dropped a word which made me more circumspect, and instead of leaving my poem under my lesson book, I took it to the hole in the wall where it was safe. On my return I caught a glimpse of the Abbé Thomas searching my desk.... A few days passed by.

One morning I was sent to Lichères; I had become fond of the road to this village, and of the lime merchant, with his white wine and his cream cheese. I went secretly to my hiding place, withdrew the poem, and put it, not in my pocket, but . . . in my breeches. Wise precaution! On I know not what pretext, the Abbé Thomas felt in my pockets as if in jest. He seemed surprised to find nothing! I departed.

On the way I had an idea: supposing I had been spied upon, supposing Sister Pinon had seen me? Supposing my hiding place was known? . . . What luck that I had my note-book safe! I took it out of my breeches and began to read it. I was tempted to tear it into a thousand pieces, or bury it in a field where it would decay. "But supposing I could save it, and keep it to work upon when I know more?" Even as I spoke, I had destroyed the part concerning Marguerite, and bitterly regretted it. . . . No pleasant fantasies beguiled that journey; my thoughts were tremulous and confused, like those of a guilty man wondering what he is to say if he is arrested. . . .

I found Lemoine at Lichères, and everything went as on my first journey there: the white wine, the cream cheese, with garlic and salt and pepper, were excellent. "Do you know, Monsieur Nicolas," said Lemoine, "you have the makings of a good cupman. You take it neat!" I told him I never drank wine as, with the exception of his white wine, I preferred water. He discovered a compliment in my answer, which I had not intended, and putting his arm round my neck, shouted the refrain of an old song:

Toss it down, mates, toss it down!

I was proud of being treated as a man, for our masters (whether rightly or wrongly I do not know) treated us as though we were brats of ten or less, instead of young men of fifteen and seventeen. When people came to the Presbytery, whose houses we had already visited and who had treated us as men, we were mortified by being ordered about, and rated for trifles that would have been passed over in private. This conduct irritated us: Huet sulked, I became more uncouth, and Melin more mischievous. . . . Lemoine, with whom I was sitting at table, was related to my family, and was an admirer of my father, of the Curé and of the Abbé Thomas. I drank my share of three bottles. My host got a little tipsy and wanted to go on drinking. I put it to him that it was getting late and that I lived in the house of an Ecclesiastic. "You're right! But what a pity! And, zounds, how sad to see a man of my age outdrunk by a mere boy! . . . But you are right: I see that you are intelligent like the rest of your family. . . . Farewell, Monsieur Nicolas."

I left exultant. I wanted to profit by the wine's sweet warmth to add something to my first Canto. I sat down just off the road under a cornel-tree, and, in my vinous mood, related my adventure with Marguerite Miné, using other names: I remember very little about it, as I never re-read it. The sun was setting before the episode was finished, and I still had more than a league to go; I quickened my pace. On my arrival the household was just sitting down to supper. Judge of my surprise on seeing Lemoine, who had apparently arrived some long time before. Immediately after I had left him some excellent lime had come in; then Droin, the son of the Courgis attorney, had passed on horseback, and Lemoine, who was slightly tipsy, had a glass or two more with his new guest, saddled his horse, and took advantage of his company to come and arrange a day on which to deliver the lime. They had followed the only road, and I, writing just off it, had heard them pass without seeing them. I was scolded with considerable arrogance in his presence; my brothers knew that I had taken wine, as Lemoine had told his tale in all simplicity, and were anxious to see whether I was drunk, but I answered with a bashful self-possession which gave them nothing to take hold of. Nevertheless I was so much disturbed that I did not go to my hole in the wall to put away my note-book. After supper I hurried to bed, meaning to get up in the morning and hide it. (But this would not have averted my fate; for Sister Pinon, stooping between two rows of climbing peas, had seen me in the morning remove the stone which covered my hiding place, and, though she did not know what I took out, had told the Abbé Thomas.) If only I had taken the precaution to put it back in the lining of my coat! But I left it in my pocket! . . .

On waking next morning, my first thought was for the poem. I hurried to get up and out of the room, on pretext of a need. When I reached the path by my hiding place I felt in my pocket and found . . . nothing! . . . Terrified I returned and looked on the bed, in it, underneath it. . . . Nothing. . . . Then I comforted myself: perhaps I had dropped it in the wood when I got up in a hurry. I was tempted to escape then and there and, as I was a swift runner, go for it as quickly as my legs would carry me, so as not to make my appearance until I had placed it in safety. I watched for a chance, but none offered. During the morning I noticed the Abbé Thomas go several times to his brother's room. Usually the latter spent the morning in Church: he did not go there until eleven o'clock; he did not say his Mass! Still I had no idea that I was the cause of this, and that he considered his mind besmirched by my verses! (Good taste should have taken more offence than modesty!) At dinner, an icy chill. . . . It was then that I regretted Marguerite, who would have kept me informed as she had on other and far less important occasions! Nothing was said to me during recreation. The next day passed. Vague fears inspired by this new reserve prevented me from making my escape to the Lichères wood; also I thought they were looking at me less blackly. Insensibly I was reassured and became convinced that I had dropped my verses, and that the innocent remarks of Lemoine were the cause of my masters' stern coldness.

Next morning, towards midday, I saw my father arrive, and went out to embrace him. He looked at me as though surprised to see no change in my face. But he was left no time to talk with me. The Abbé Thomas took possession of him, and ordered Huet to fetch M. le Curé, who was in the Church. They shut themselves up together. Then my heart beat: I suspected that my verses were in their hands; but when and how, and who had taken them? I never knew. . . . The Abbé Thomas remained with us. In a few minutes he was summoned, and was closeted with them for a quarter of an hour. After which they came out to sit down to table.

My father wore a sorrowful expression; he did not address me. I had no doubt now of my misfortune, and, remembering the licence of my verses, I suffered ten times more pain during that melancholy dinner than I had had pleasure in all the six months of writing them. I could have wished that the earth would open and hide me. . . . On leaving the table, my father, who never slept from home save when he went farther than Auxerre, took leave of his two sons and departed. All five of us escorted him to the gate called *de Préhy*. There my brothers and my two schoolfellows left us, and my father told me to follow him. I experienced the pangs of a criminal led to the torture. At first my father was silent; then, turning round, for I was walking behind him: "Come to me," he said. . . . Doubtless my visible pallor excited his compassion, for he was not as terrible as his aspect presaged; but his reproof was the more efficacious for that. This is what he said:

"I have just heard and seen things concerning you as distressing, as humiliating to a father and as afflicting to a mother, as they are shameful to you! . . . You lose your virtue in the very sanctuary of virtue! The extent of your corruption astonishes me the more since I believe it is natural to you! What! You are scarcely born, before you exhale the very refinement of salacity! . . . One girl, one woman is not enough for you; you must have twelve! You must have a seraglio! . . . You use the intelligence which Our Lord has given you, to offend Him! . . . You devote the first fruits of your reason, your learning, and your progress in Letters, to vice and the most shameless licence! Oh Heavens! Who would have thought it, seeing the hypocritical modesty upon your face? What will be your mother's astonishment and grief? They will be equal to my surprise and pain! . . . The hopes of your poor mother, who counted on you to attain, by merit even more than by learning, the same position as the sons of my first marriage, are to be utterly destroyed! . . . When your two elder brothers were studying at Auxerre, never was I summoned to look into such shame. . . . I, their father, blushed in their presence for being yours. . . . It was as though I shared your infamy. Their glances and their surprise reproached me for a second marriage, always condemned by children of the first; and now in my case justly, since it has borne such fruit as you. . . . By your writings and your actions you have made your father blush. . . ."

My honoured father fell silent, and I, confounded, crushed, felt a real remorse together with a firm resolve never again to be guilty of the same fault. "Oh," I thought to myself, "if my father knew everything! . . ." I was tempted to throw myself at his feet and confess all my conduct, and to claim his indulgence by telling him that I thus arraigned myself in order to put an extra check on myself. . . . But I had not the strength. Then I thought of begging him to secure the hand of Jeannette Rousseau against the time when I should have a position to offer her; but the reproach *you must have twelve* arrested me. Besides I felt my incapacity, my insignificance, with a force proportionate to my humiliation; I had even lost my courage. . . . At last, seeing that my father's continued silence appeared to demand some reply, I said: "Father! I ask God's pardon and yours for a fault far greater, as I now see, than I had thought at first: the pain it causes me is my chief punishment. . . . I entreat you (if one as guilty as myself may ask a favour) to spare my mother a cruel grief! Let me be doubly punished, that she may not have this pain!" "That is well spoken; you can think for yourself, which makes you all the guiltier. But I am a father; and I remit your punishment to that time, if it ever comes, when you also are one; then you will suffer what I am suffering!" (Poor wretch! I was charmed that my suffering should be postponed until the time when I should be a father! Ah, I have endured this pain, remitted to a distant date, to the very uttermost! I endure it now and shall endure it to my latest sigh.) . . . As he finished these terrible words my father beckoned me to him, and embraced me with tears in his eyes, saying: "Foolish youth rushes on its own destruction, and itself supplies the weapons against itself. This has been a great misfortune to a father, for I have seen much more and much worse than I expected! Many years will not efface this stain. . . . Go back and reform. . . ."

I bowed and turned away, but as my father receded from me, I heard him utter these terrible words which I did not then understand: "Oh God, Virtue has sinned to-day!"

I had walked about half a league with my father on the road to Saint-Cyr. I returned so absorbed in what had passed that, at the door of the presbytery, I was still hearing my father's voice raised in reproof. The Abbé Thomas said nothing to me. I was engrossed in thought; I took up a book, which I did not read; I was oblivious to everything except my conscience, which traced my father's words upon the page. At supper the Curé made covert allusion to the matter, but his words have escaped me; they made no impression.

This abstraction continued next day. I was crushed. I worked, but without inclination. Jeannette's image, formerly balm to my mind, only added to my sadness; I was without mind or soul now that the spirit of this amiable girl no longer animated me. But at the age I then was, painful impressions are soon effaced. . . .

Of the three or four books which Michel Linard had lent to me, I had only kept the *Théâtre du Monde*, which being moral and filled with quotations from the Holy Fathers, seemed one that might safely be found; and I had let the Abbé Thomas see it. I was writing no more verses, and began to regain some sense of security. Indeed I was feeling utterly safe, when one morning, before I had got up, the Curé entered in a fury, his stick raised against me (he was setting out for Auxerre): "Oh wretched boy, wallowing in filth," he exclaimed, "give me all your wicked books at once, or! . . ." He was going to strike me, but the Abbé Thomas, who was much cooler, restrained him. (Nevertheless it was through his information that I was subjected to this scene.) I took the *Théâtre du Monde* from my pocket: "This is the only one I have." I realised it was what he wanted; but I was surprised, as the Abbé Thomas had given it back to me after glancing through it. Later, apparently, he reflected that he was not sufficiently enlightened to judge of it and discover the hidden venom. The Curé's behaviour revolted me: I was certain that the *Théâtre du Monde* contained a healthy moral, and

I realised that it was I, not the book, that roused their spleen. I did not estimate justly what I had done to set them against me, or appreciate the gravity of my offence, to a devout Jansenist, against the principles I professed to hold. Reason took offence; for the first time I hated my brothers and looked upon them as my enemies. I formed the plan of leaving them, and throwing myself into the arms of the Jesuits. But M. de Caylus, my father's friend and patron, was still alive; I could do nothing. What was I to do? The Curé's mistaken action made me take a step at which I shudder even after a lapse of forty years.

It was September; and my thoughts turned to the master of the choir boys at Bicêtre. I remembered that M. Maurice, the assistant master, had been no older when I arrived there than I was now: I had reached my full height and was well-developed. Also I remembered that this young man had continued his own studies while he was teaching. My rapid progress had made me conceited, and I took it into my head to write to the Abbé Thomas's successor, offering to be his assistant. There was no common sense in this proceeding. I made certain complaints against my brothers in the letter and, with childish credulity, imagined that the new master, seeing evidences of a desire to leave the Jansenists, would receive me with open arms. I had no idea that the pitiable nonentity who had been put in charge of the choir boys did not even know the words Jansenist and Molinist. On the other hand he was the intimate friend of a certain Brother *François*, formerly cobbler to the fraternity and colporteur of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, but now retired to Bicêtre as porter, and informant to such of the expelled Jansenists as still took an interest in the institution. The Jansenist shoemaker, whose lowly station saved him from being suspect, was consulted about my letter, which was well enough expressed.

Brother François trembled with delight and pious horror. What a piece of news! What a tale to tell! An apostate! What a fine thing to send back the letter to my brothers! "You must lend me this." His simple friend entrusted it to him. Brother François put on his Sunday clothes and hurried to M. Duprat in Paris, who prudently took possession of the letter and was going to burn it. François showed the greatest distress. It was a trust! Duprat gave it back, pledging him to suppress it. François made no promise and, on his return to Bicêtre, obtained ownership of the letter, wrapped it up in a long statement of his own, and put the parcel in the post.

During the fortnight after my letter had been despatched, I was careful to meet Cady, the Courgis huxter, on each of his return journeys, to enquire for letters. They were delivered to me, and I looked at once to see whether my answer was among them, for I had vague fears. Unluckily I was occupied on the day and at the moment when Brother François' parcel arrived, and it was Huet who went to fetch the letters from Cady. I neither saw him go out nor come back. Huet was a busybody, and when he saw a fat packet for the Curé, he took it to him at once in the Confessional. He said nothing to me when he came back. I was still occupied; but at last I finished and hurried to Cady, who told me he had just handed a large packet to M. Huet. My heart beat; but I was far from imagining that my letter had been sent back. The words *big packet* reassured me.

When the confession he was hearing came to an end, the Curé opened the packet and must have read the contents with an amazement easily imagined! . . . I was working at my table in the evening when, for the second time, I heard comings and goings: the Curé, Abbé Thomas, and even M. le Chapelain, who had always taken my part and had found excuse even for my verses (which Apollo would never have forgiven) by explaining, in a letter to my father, the physical and moral causes of this aberration much better than I could have done myself: Marguerite had given him more understanding of my character than my brothers could ever have had. Everything was in a ferment; even Sister Pinon looked mysterious. Then I began to take serious alarm! "Ah, Marguerite," I whispered, "why aren't you here! And it was I who deprived myself of my support and friend!" But I was still unaware of the full extent of my misfortune; for this incident was to have far more terrible consequences than my verses! Supper time came; the Curé entered. He threw a burning glance at me. He blessed the food, and just before sitting down he added, his eyes upon me: "*Tu qui manducabas panes meos mecum, ipse levavisti pedem tuum contra me! . . .*" This verse from the Psalms told me all. Then my imagination, always ready to take fright, painted my fault in the blackest colours, and my heart fainted. I was tempted to run away after supper. It was impossible. On rising from table, the Curé, after pacing the room two or three times, knelt down and said the evening prayer in French, according to custom, and then recited the Seven Penitential Psalms, adding that one containing the verse he had applied to me: *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*

I leave it to be imagined in what a terrible position I found myself! . . . Next morning everyone was in a pother as on the evening before: nothing had yet been said to me about my letter, nor had any reproof been administered. I was alone for a moment. The Curé entered, beckoned me to him without speaking, read me the letter, and went away without comment. Then M. le Chapelain arrived; he went into the Curé's room followed by the Abbé Thomas. Doubtless they were going to call me; but I took advantage of that moment's solitude to escape and get to my father's house.

To have any idea of what I suffered on the way, it would be necessary to be in my position; and to have my imagination which, mistrustful and suspicious, has always made life a misery to me! I got home without having reached any decision. I was truthful (alas, it was only in the town I lost this quality!), but how confess the reason of my flight? . . . Yet I would have done so, had not fear triumphed: I was only bold to do evil in secret. . . . So I said that I was on my way to Oudun for wood. . . . They believed me. I left after lunch. Three hours later the Abbé Thomas arrived very much disturbed; he did not know what had become of me. No one in the town had seen me pass; I had gone by back ways and taken cover behind hedges whenever I saw a vine-dresser. His enquiries along the roads to Préhy, to Puitsdebond, to La Métairie Rouge were equally unfruitful; for my fear of dogs made me usually go by way of Saint-Cyr and Vaux-Germains. So he arrived at my father's house with little idea of finding me there. He was told that I had been, and the reason I had given for going on my way. They had no doubt but that I was walking at haphazard. But where could I go without money? All the money that my mother had given me had been found at Courgis penny by penny, in a little basket for dice, and so rusty that they were nearly worthless. It was obvious that I had not gone to Paris, since I had turned in the opposite direction. My father (most admirable of men) held my fault in abhorrence, though even the Abbé Thomas extenuated it, saying that I had perhaps been treated over severely since my verses (this was the first my mother had heard of that unlucky incident). My father set out at once for Joux, the road I had taken; but he could get no news of me from my sister, Marianne Marsigny, as she had not seen me. Filled with a mortal anxiety he returned. . . . But where had I been?

On leaving my father's house, where I had confessed nothing, I felt utterly without resources; for I could get no distance save by begging and the thought of this depressed me. When I came to Bout-parc, I turned aside to meditate, and there shed many bitter tears! I was but two paces from my valley, but my deep dejection extinguished all desire to revisit it: grief, and above all anxiety, poisons every pleasure. Part of the day I passed lying down, in a childish realisation of my deplorable situation without being able to conceive any way out of it. At last the need for food became pressing, and I decided to go home and be guided by circumstances.

My father was coming back from Joux and, as I went very slowly, he overtook me by la Chapelle, sitting under a bush deep in thought. "Why, what are you doing here, Nicolas?" he said smiling. His way of speaking made me think that he knew nothing yet. "I was coming back, father." "Let us go together, then." He said nothing about his journey to Joux or its reason, so that I thought he had been on ordinary business, to register his deeds (for we know that he was notary – so that in this my father and Jeannette's held the same position). When we got home, I found the Abbé Thomas there; he greeted me without constraint and I was touched. He took me away without saying a single word about my fault. . . . As we walked he counselled me to ask our elder brother's pardon. I did so, and afterwards the Abbé's; both of them said they forgave me.

As time passed, I was made to feel my fault more and more (which I do not resent). First I learned that the Bishop, and M. de Caylus, Superior of the Seminary, and M. Viel – in fact all the principal ecclesiastics of Auxerre, such as the canons and Jansenist Curés – had been informed of it. I felt this deeply! But it was I who had committed the fault; I was more to blame than those who divulged it. Then I heard from the Chaplain's housekeeper, who had heard it from Sister Pinon, that my verses and my letter were deposited in the Sacristy, as memorials against me, and to demand vengeance from the Lord. I paled with terror! I had read in the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert of a somewhat similar deposit made against a guilty man by his mother, and he could not evade his punishment. Again I hated my brothers, and more fiercely than before.

My brothers, on their side, had finally decided my fate. They adroitly interrupted the course of my studies, at first by leaving me to my own resources. But seeing that I applied myself to my books with redoubled energy (they knew nothing of her who powerfully drove me; they thought me merely lascivious, whereas I was loving too; but this would have passed their understanding, or would have produced no change in their way of thinking. Once passion is confounded with the crimes of its excess, the guide strays from the path and loses those he claims to lead), as, I say, my industry increased and their decision was immutable, they used up my time in errands and manual work. At last they spoke openly to my father of giving me a trade. Edme Restif answered: "I am not fond of town trades; they are made for the poor dwellers in cities. Unless your young brother is to be educated, my own estate is preferable; but if he is to fill this with any distinction and be able to occupy the more honourable and lucrative positions which I myself hold, he must be instructed. Teach him, then, or give him back to me." His firmness disconcerted my brothers, who retreated behind religion, pointing out how I had abused the little learning I had already got. "Ah," said my father, "if we judged of men before they have reached sixteen, or even twenty, or sometimes even twenty-five, the best people would often be rejected! My sons, I have some experience myself and the opinion of two men worthy of respect, of whom one was my most honourable relative, the lawyer Restif. Do not judge hastily." The Curé of Courgis had very much more deference for his spiritual than for his carnal parents; my father's wise discourse had no effect, and what he dared not do openly was done indirectly. Circumstances favoured my brothers' hate. . . . But how will all this end? We shall soon see.

We have reached the twenty-second of October. I was wasting my time, but I did not dare ask to leave Courgis, where I could see Jeannette. I had no news of Marguerite, and I did not know how to communicate with her; besides, since that letter had been sent back, I had a horror of putting anything in the post, and everything frightened me. My position was exceedingly disagreeable. Then one of those accidents, so terrible that the mind shudders at them, befell the town of Courgis! On the morning of the twenty-second, I went into the garden after breakfast to think over my troubles. As I entered the courtyard I saw a column of smoke above my head which seemed to come from the direction of the Porte de Chablis; that is, from the North, and it was from the North that the wind was blowing. I shouted to my schoolfellows, and they came out with the Abbé Thomas. "It is a cloud," said Huet. "It is a fire!" exclaimed the Abbé Thomas. He sent Melin for news. The rascal never came back, so I went. Three houses were already on fire, and the wind, carrying away the thatch from the roofs, threw great jets of flame over the whole town. I ran to carry the tidings. The Abbé Thomas raised the cry for help, warned the Curé, rang the alarm, gathered the men together and, as water is scarce in Courgis, urged them to arrest the fire by knocking down an isolated house. After some deliberation, for the owner was not to be found, they decided to do this and forced the door as the thatched roof took fire. Several men went upstairs at the peril of their lives, and managed to pull down the roof from the loft, but the shock of the collapse caused a great misfortune. A handful of rye-straw (called thatch in Paris) was detached by it, and carried flaming from the house of *Jeannin le Maigre* to the middle of the town, and on to that of *Jeannin le Gras* who, it was said, had an acre of property alight. . . . When the men who were breaking down the house saw that the fire had got ahead of them, they lost courage; and when they saw the owners of the house, both husband and wife, who had shut themselves in, smothered to death by the flames and smoke, each hastened to his own home to save what he could. Mothers, carrying nothing away with them but their children, were driven from street to street by the fire. The aspect, the steady crackling, the clamorous outbursts of the conflagration, roused deep horror in the soul. Bold and intrepid, I went wherever the fire had not absolutely closed the way. I climbed up into the clock tower, thought to be in danger, to save it from the sparks. From there I regarded the ravages of the fire. It was the most horrible spectacle that I have ever seen in my life. A hundred and forty-nine houses were all burning at once with the harvests stored in them, and giving off a cloud of smoke that veiled the sun. On the other side of the road, buildings isolated from the fire would begin to smoke hideously, first black and then red, and then burst furiously into flame. I came down again; I went up and down all the roads which were not on fire, and met no one; it was a terrifying solitude, of which the horror was increased by the presence of those animals who shun the day: martens, weasels and rats issued from the heated cottages, announcing their approaching conflagration. In the general panic I saw Jeannette and her mother come out from their house, the latter carrying her youngest child; the father and brother were busy in saving such deeds and effects as could most easily be carried away. . . . I said to Melin: "Run and tell them that there is no danger in the Presbytery garden!" I sent a message, not daring to address them myself; and if they had gone to the garden, I should have taken good care to keep out of it! The Abbé Thomas worked courageously, and no one took any thought for the Presbytery, which was saved by its isolation among gardens and its tiled roof. Full of faith, the Curé went forth to fight the flames with the God whose minister he was. . . . Three-quarters of the town was destroyed; from the Chablis gate upwards in a triangle to the place where the *rue de l'Église* leaves the *Grand'rue*, and downwards to the *Porte de Beine*. With the exception of the church and the Presbytery, only the little quarter sheltered from the wind near to the Préhy gate was spared. The entire wheat harvest was reduced to cinders; even the wine was lost, as the barrels were either crushed, or buried under the cellars, or smoked. The progress of the flames was not arrested until evening; and the beams smouldered for more than three days without our being able to extinguish them for want of water.*

The misfortune which had just happened suspended all private dissensions; this public disaster was our sole preoccupation. The Curé of Courgis is in truth the father of his parishioners; he works without respite to succour them. His first step was to call upon his neighbours for help; he became a beggar, so to say, to save his people from beggary. He exhorted them to remain in the village, and to busy themselves in clearing away the ruins, at the same time promising to see to their food. Which he did. But the bad characters made the catastrophe an excuse for taking to the road; so the Curé wrote to the Sub-delegate of *Éon*, father of *la Chevalière*, who induced them to go back to their parishes. M. de Caylus sent rice and corn;

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*Restif's account of this fire is confirmed by the "Souvenir d'un Maire de Village," published in the *Annuaire de L'Yonne* for 1892. [Ed.]

the Seigneur Baron lent money for rebuilding and for seed. Huet, Melin and myself were busy all the Winter copying circular letters, which were sent to the Curés for twenty miles round. Trustworthy townspeople were the bearers of them, the local pastors made the collection, and our emissary brought it back, losing nothing on the return journey, as it was augmented by Curés and wealthy householders by the way. Our envoys always took one circular with them composed for the laity, which they addressed and delivered according to information received on the spot; they were cordially welcomed, for the letter was excellently written and very affecting. When the Curé of Courgis had thus provided for the prime necessities, he left the spiritual needs of the parish in the hands of the good Chaplain, and the temporal to the Abbé Thomas; and went to seek more abundant help in the Capital. He was fortunate enough to obtain sufficient money to rebuild the burned houses.

I had a peaceful enough time during his absence. I wrote circular letters, and worked a little on the sly; my *Traité de la Prosodie Latine* had been taken away, but not my *Racines Grecques*, and I learned to read this language which has since been very useful to me. I still have my first exercise book dated 1749, with a face drawn on the title page and underneath the words *Homo doloris*, which expressed my state of mind. After this is written: *Kurgisii, vel Kurgiaci, a Kurdibus fundatoribus, 1749. . . .* But apart from the fact that the Abbé no longer corrected my work, there were many distractions. Every day our messengers were coming back with tales of their journeys; these were sometimes entertaining, and I have introduced them into other books. But they are not relevant here, and I will confine myself to the encounter between M. Stallin, Jeannette's uncle, and the philosopher Curé of Ligny or Maligny, in the diocese of Langres, between Courgis and

Tonnerre. This pastor was negligent in his dress, and left all open in his house as did the ancient Spartans. When M. Stallin arrived, he found the Curé cooking his meal, which was as simple as everything else, some cabbage with some salt pork. "Be very welcome," he said to the stranger; "the soup is ready and we are just going to sit down to it." He set the table, for he had neither housekeeper nor servant. A neighbour washed up for him, that is to say one pot and one plate for each day, and mended his clothes. When the food was ready he went to the door, whence he called to the passing villagers: "I have cabbage and pork; come and eat." Stallin explained his errand. "Ah, my children," exclaimed the pastor to his assembled flock, "we must do as we would be done by if we had been destroyed by fire! They are our brothers, and a great misfortune has stripped them of everything. People accustomed to want for nothing, women and girls, are deprived even of necessities, and dwell among the horrors of hunger and uncleanliness!" Stallin was not without a certain eloquence. Encouraged by the pastor's words, he drew a picture of the disaster at Courgis which, if it was not as fine as that of the *Excidium Trojae,* was hardly less pathetic. The kind-hearted Curé wept and, to set the example, went to his money box, which was not far off; for it was on the inner side of the ledge round the pillar of his old-fashioned chimney. He had four gold louis, and he offered half. "No, no!" exclaimed Stallin. "That is too much. We ask people to give in charity, not to despoil themselves; you are too generous, Monsieur le Curé. Your parishioners are your children, and they may have need of you." The Curé looked at Stallin in some surprise. "When I was reading your priest's letter," he said, "I admired him: now I admire his envoy. Tell me, honest parishioner, what like of man is your Curé?" Stallin, a friend of my brothers, praised them so unaffectedly that his words carried conviction. The good priest listened greedily, tears of emotion in his eyes. "Ah," he exclaimed when Stallin ceased speaking, "then there are still worthy priests who in their lives bring back the apostolic times! I praise God for it! Blessed be Thy name, O God! I have other resources for my children here, friend. I may perhaps never see you again; so I give you these two louis in compassion for the sufferers, and these other two in friendship for my brother of Courgis: dare you refuse what is given in brotherly charity and love?" Stallin was obliged to accept them. After the frugal dinner the good Curé went to beg from those of his parishioners whom he knew were in a position to give; and this little parish produced a hundred *écus,* of which the poor pastor had furnished ninety-six livres. This incident pleased me, and enchanted the Chaplain Foynat. He wrote a letter to the Curé which was worthy of both of them, for he said amongst other things: *"I hear from Monsieur Stallin, our collector, that he told you much about Monsieur le Curé of Courgis and his brother, but that he said no word about me. Now I should be grieved if so worthy a minister at our altars did not know of my existence and of my respect for him; so I have written this letter to testify my high esteem and sincere friendship, . . ."* etc.

My eldest brother came back from Paris for Holy Week. Until his return, I continued my studies intermittently, and the Abbé Thomas, although the declared enemy of my work, did not dare to take upon himself to prevent me; he was afraid that I would complain to my father. Also perhaps his constant fooling with Sister Pinon, childish as it was, made him more timid than one would have supposed. (Here I may be permitted a singular observation. Love brings everyone into submission, even the most fanatic pietists. The Abbé responded automatically to the soft curves of Sister Pinon, while the Curé took some pleasure in the adoration of the provocative Chevrier: I inferred this from the affectionate tone in which he called her "*my dear sister*" in conversation. All this is obvious, and I was far from being shocked by it! I allowed my elder brothers all the virtue they could have desired; yet perhaps they were hurt that I should have dared to include some of their cherished lambs in my seraglio.) So I continued my studies, alone indeed, for the Abbé Thomas, on the pretext of other work, paid not the slightest attention to me. Yet the absence of Huet, who was gone to Auxerre to teach in the Écoles Saint-Charles, left him more free time. . . .

When, on his return, the Curé saw me occupied as usual, he made his surprise clear to the Abbé. I do not know what the latter said; but from that day my dictionaries and all my books were taken away. I did not say anything, but I sank into a kind of stupor. No longer did I dare to raise my eyes to Jeannette in church. I opened my heart less than ever; I became more and more uncouth; nothing was left to give me assurance; nothing to exalt my soul: I was prevented from learning! I wanted to leave Courgis, and everything seemed to drive me from it. Marguerite still did not come back; presumably she had had a good confinement, as she was well; this I had overheard, but I had no private news; I did not know the child's sex, or whether it was alive or dead. I never knew till long after . . . it was a girl. To crush me finally and make me voluntarily deliver myself over to ignorance, as they had already done, the Curé spoke as follows: "You think that you are clever, but you only have occasional flashes of imagination, and nothing substantial." (He was wrong; given a different education I should have become a profound physicist.) Quite simply, I believed him; and it was the greatest of my misfortunes that I did so! . . . O Reader, never break a child's spirit! . . . I believed the Curé of Courgis, and this fatal modesty cost me the fifteen best years of my youth (from 1750 to 1765, with occasional intervals). I did not emerge from this baleful stupor until I was thirty-two years old! . . . I believed him, but I bore him a grudge for having convinced me. I thought to myself: "And what have you? According to what I know of you and your behaviour towards me – just flashes, no more. . . ." But this thought, though it diminished the Curé's worth in my eyes, only confirmed his dispiriting estimate of my capacity: "I am like him in face," I thought, "without being as goodlooking; we are of the same strong build, but I am a little less so.* What have they done for us? Huet, at Saint-Charles, is given over to a vice that I abhor; Melin is an empty-headed clown. They have made us hate religion instead of loving it. I found it admirable when I arrived,† whereas now the Offices are a weariness: the affectation of piety makes piety irksome. . . . Yes, he is right: neither of us is intelligent." Thus I judged the Curé by myself, and myself by the Curé: as for the Abbé Thomas, I had long been struck by his obtuseness. I had often laughed at him to myself while he was teaching me. And perhaps he noticed it, which would not have endeared me to him! For we must presume that my brothers' hatred was not absolutely gratuitous, although it had existed before my major faults. I have admitted that my shyness was due to an excessive pride; but nobody in the world could approve their vengeance. Sometimes I would say to myself: "This vengeance is unworthy of a Restif; it only becomes a Dondène. . . ."

Such was my mood when Good Friday arrived. On this day a trifle put a crown upon my wrong doings. I say a trifle, because I protest here that

*This resemblance was so striking that in the surrounding villages I was recognised for his brother as I passed by; whereas, when the Abbé Thomas gave his name, people were astonished.

†I then did my penance after confession kneeling in the snow during winter, and on the gravel in summer.

I was guiltless of every motive attributed to me by the Curé. It was the stupor into which I had fallen, the scorn of myself which had been driven into me, that alone and with no other reason led me to omit a religious ceremony, indifferent enough in itself. It was customary, but not obligatory, for everyone to go up and *adore* the Cross in the hands of the Celebrant . . . I meant to go up with the others; but first, out of humility, I allowed the more important people of the town to pass before me; I deferred and deferred, and before I had found courage to rise it was the women's turn. It was not becoming to go with them; everyone would have stared at me; and I dared not go after them. I thought that I had been overlooked in the crowd, so I did not go at all. Overlooked! I was wrong. When the Office was finished the Curé summoned the Abbé Thomas to the Sacristy and retailed his grievance, the greatest he had had yet, and asked that I should be sent to him. My two brothers believed, or pretended to believe, that I scorned religion and abjured it; and that profane authors had made me, not an *atheist*, but a *pagan*, such as the famous Emperor Julian called the Apostate, to whom they did me the honour to liken me. The Curé acted in accordance with this idea. I was so little guilty in intention, that I went to him gaily. Judge of my surprise when, on entering the Sacristy, he fell upon his knees in front of me and conjured me with tears not to abandon the religion of my fathers! I was so bewildered, so astonished at this mummery that I remained speechless. I still did not comprehend. "You scorn the Cross of Jesus Christ who died for you!" Understanding from this the origin of his mistake, I got on my knees too, but astonishment still held me fast. A host of thoughts troubled me; and one especially irritated and made me insensible to my brother's pathetic discourse. I realised dimly that an occasion had been snatched at to make me abhorrent to everyone, and to pile shame and scorn and obloquy upon me. How can I tell? Perhaps to give an excuse for putting me . . . I had seen the reformatory at Bicêtre. . . . I could find no words to answer; and preserved a gloomy silence, which confirmed the Curé in his opinion. He redoubled his prayers and exhortations. (I am now convinced that it was no comedy; the Curé really believed me guilty, but he believed it because he did not like me.) I was inexpressibly troubled, and this moment was one of the most painful in my life! I saw with grief and indignation how ill they thought of me, and how this made them put the most criminal interpretation on every action and omission. I remained speechless for fear of saying the wrong thing, or rather my tongue was tied; it was physically impossible for me to speak, though I felt it was required. The Curé seemed rent with grief; I agree that his piety was sincere, and that he loved his ministry and his religion as a good son loves his mother, a good husband his virtuous wife; therefore he must have suffered much; but I suffered a great deal more! As he could get nothing out of me, he sent me away.

Then indeed my brother, who so eloquently exhorted us to love God, should have felt how important it was to make his pupils love instead of fear him. With the least little bit of confidence, I would have spoken simply and freely, as I did later to my parents. When dinner was finished and the grace said, the Curé uttered a cruel reproach. . . .* Then for the first time I felt my courage rise against him: that tendency to anger, to transports of rage, which has so often betrayed me, manifested itself; I was in a state which is more terrible in the timid than in the bold, because it puts them more extravagantly beside themselves: "At last I understand!" I exclaimed. "You are both my enemies. I hate you in my turn as much as you hate me; I can justly reproach you with all my faults; they are your handiwork. I feel no remorse for them at all, it is for you to feel it; they only make me angry and hate you!" After this frantic outburst, all strength left me and I fainted. . . .

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*He attacked my mother: this is relevant to my father's exclamation: "Virtue itself has sinned to-day."

My taunts and sudden hardihood, after the bashful respect with which I had always behaved in the presence of my elder brother, and my swoon – all combined to throw my brothers into amazement. And they were the more humiliated because I had spoken in front of my two schoolfellows (Huet had been sent back to us from the Écoles Saint-Charles), my sister Marie, who had come from Paris to pass Lent with us, and Sister Pinon. My swoon, which was beyond suspicion genuine, prevented the natural consequences of my action. I was tended, and came to myself with difficulty. At first I could remember nothing. Then, as memory returned, I was dissolved in tears, and protesting my innocence, revealed the causes of my action. They believed me, and the Curé was a little ashamed of his hasty action; but I was never forgiven. It was after this that everything was taken from me, even to writing paper, no doubt to force my father to remove me. Also my sister Marie advised them to do this.

My experiences at Courgis are for ever a lesson to parents never to entrust children by a second marriage to their step-brothers. Children of the same father and a different mother can never truly love one another, whatever people may say, since religion and the truest piety could not induce this feeling in my brothers. . . . My sister from Paris went with them, but without me, to visit my father. Would it be believed that, in spite of my admitted justification, she presented my failure to adore the Cross as she had at first conceived it! I know this to be the case, and that my father, in all things good and admirable, made answer: "My daughter, have you reflected that you are speaking of my son? . . . I forgive you: your affection for your brothers and my eldest sons excuses what you have said; you deprive me of nothing since, what you take away from one who is dear to me, you give to others equally dear. Nevertheless you are unjust towards Nicolas. I cannot credit the motive you attribute to him, nor should you believe it of my son, even were it true; all who bear your father's name should be sacred to you. Such is the opinion of my kind and worthy sister, Madeleine Restif, and if she were here, she would gravely reprimand you. I am doubly grieved by what you say, for it seems to show that the spirit and affection which have always animated my family are to cease in the children of Marie Dondène, and yet she was an admirable woman! (May she be eternally happy as I trust she is.)" Marie Restif was not insensitive; she was impressed by these words, and said no more against me; but I have never been able to like her since. Besides, during her stay at Courgis, a melancholy contrast had been forced upon me by the unity which existed between the children of the first marriage: all the consideration, the attentions, the loving kindness, the little gracious words! I was not jealous; I have always approved of anything that was good in itself; but they made me feel all the more painfully the wrongs done voluntarily to me in daily severities such as I never experienced before, and never since for any length of time, even among strangers: my sojourn in the house of Mme Parangon, angelic alike in kindness, beauty and in virtue, will soon be evidence of this; she was like an attentive mother to me.

My brothers and I were now completely at odds. The Curé never spoke to me; the Abbé Thomas treated me as a stranger; my father was urged to take me home. Perhaps I wanted to go . . . but I gave no help by asking.

. . . Alas, my position was grievous; in order to leave those who hated me, whom I did not love, I had also to leave Jeannette! . . . But my soul was blighted; for a long time I had not dared in church to look at her whom I adored; everything that I did was observed and misinterpreted: I was as one dead. No more progress; no more success to flatter my sad heart with the hope of being worthy of her; Monsieur Nicolas was just an ordinary peasant, sustained by nothing save his indignation. Sometimes I rose in fury against the executioners who had condemned my mind to death; but my rage was impotent. . . . I had been hoping for news of Marguerite; now I no longer hoped (had a letter been intercepted? Had M. Foynat betrayed me?). I wanted to go away but, grown wise at my own expense, I was too prudent to ask to do so.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME

AND

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME IN RESTIF'S EDITION.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR
FOR THIS VOLUME

7. THE WORTHY CHAPLAIN

Monsieur Nicolas at the house of M. Foynat, chaplain of Courgis, standing between this old man and the curé: behind are Marguerite Pâris, Jeanneton the cook, and Mlle de Courtives. He is reciting The Good Shepherd; *Mlle de Courtives is saying with a penitential air: "If he is humble, he will be a saint some day!"* [*page 237*]

8. THE LITTLE CURÉS. – CRISPS!

Monsieur Nicolas standing beside his father, who is kneeling in prayer in the church of Bicêtre. The choir-boys enter and the child marvels at them, exclaiming: "Oh, what a lot of little curés!" The open background shows the Rue Charenton, with a young baked-apple seller, hands on hips, jeering at little Monsieur Nicolas. [*page 243*]

9. FAYEL, OR FRIENDSHIP

Monsieur Nicolas looking up at the delicately-favoured Fayel, who is dressed in a red cassock and is sulking; in the background, Poquet, ready in his alb to go and serve mass, is signing to Monsieur Nicolas to do as Fayel wishes: "Very well then, I will be ungrateful." [*page 251*]

10. THE PRETTY GREY SISTERS. ESTHER

Monsieur Nicolas is apparently alone with Rosalie, while Mother Saint-Augustin and Sister Mélanie can be seen behind a curtain, the one lightly whipping Fayel, and the other (the mother) pressing Poquet tenderly against her partially bared breast. Rosalie is saying to Monsieur Nicolas: "Oh, the little rogue!" and in the background, Esther: "My little white boy!" [*page 258*]

11. JEANNETTE GOING UP TO COMMUNION

Monsieur Nicolas, kneeling beside the chaplain in the choir of Courgis church, watches Jeannette advancing towards the communion table with admiration: "It is herself! There she is!" [*page 301*]

12. THE RISING SUN

Monsieur Nicolas watching the sunrise with rapture from the hill of Fontfraide, near to the high road. Behind him, as in a cloud, are Jeannette, Marianne Taboué and Marguerite: "Eye of the world, how beautiful you are!" [*page 307*]

13. THE HAYMAKING

Monsieur Nicolas haymaking with the young people of the village in the La Bretonne meadow. He is beside Marguerite Miné and is pointing to the loft. – Inset: Monsieur Nicolas sitting or half lying beside Marguerite Miné, one knee forward and his mouth close to a half-uncovered breast, listening to the voluptuous details: "I want to teach you everything!" [*page 312*]

14. WITH MARGUERITE AT THE HOUSE OF MME JEUDI

Monsieur Nicolas and Marguerite at table with Mme Jeudi of Auxerre. He is sitting between Sophie Jeudy and Hortense Quesnel, then comes Marguerite, then Mme Jeudy, and finally Sophie's young husband. Monsieur Nicolas keeps his eyes lowered and only looks at Sophie covertly. – In the background, a street with a young woman arranging the goods in a grocer's shop: "How pretty she is!" [*page 339*]

15. CATECHISM. THE CATECHISM

Monsieur Nicolas in Courgis church, reciting the Acts of the Apostles *to the assembled youth of the town. Jeannette Rousseau can be distinguished and Marianne Taboué, and Mme Chevrier, devouring the Curé with her eyes; and, among the rest, young Nolin, Adine, Bourdillat. Monsieur Nicolas occupies the foreground on the front bench, with Huet and Melin somewhat behind; and the rest of the boys occupy the benches behind them. "Nicolas, recite the Acts of the Apostles."* [*page 367*]

16. THE FIRE

Monsieur Nicolas, in the middle of a burning street, saving a package from the fire and pointing out Jeannette Rousseau, leading her little sister, and her mother carrying an infant at the breast, to Melin. He is bidding him invite them to take refuge in the curial garden: "I sent some one else, not daring to address them myself!"– In the background the curé is seen confronting the flames with the Pyx. Martens, weasels, owls, bats, etc., are fleeing from the houses. [*page 394*]

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